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THE SOLOS ISSUE

HOW NUNO BETTENCOURT CREATED THE GREATEST SOLO OF THE 21ST CENTURY

SOLOING TIPS FOR EVERY STYLE

BLUES! METAL! PSYCH-ROCK!

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JEFF BECK AND MORE!

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DOD PEDALS REVAMPED
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TECHNIQUES FOR 10 SOLOS!

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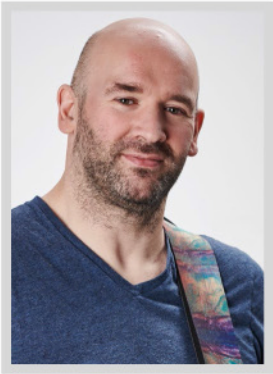

There's surely nothing more satisfying than nailing a great guitar solo. It doesn't matter what level you're at. Whether you're navigating your very first melodies or delivering a hugely technical lead break after months of dedicated practice, you just can't beat that feeling when it all comes together. And it's that elusive feeling which has inspired us to create this month's special Solos Issue of *Total Guitar*...

Back in March, Extreme dropped their comeback single *Rise*, a feelgood mid-tempo rocker. At roughly two minutes and 17 seconds in, guitarist Nuno Bettencourt delivers a jaw-dropping incendiary lead break. The internet went wild for his solo and social media was awash with superlatives. Rick Beato gushed! Justin Hawkins was blown away! *Rise*'s solo is a technical showpiece, of course, but, more importantly, it's exciting – and Nuno's feel and timing are right in the pocket!

In this issue, we speak to Nuno about his incredible solo, and he gives us his tips for how to be a better player. Inspired by Nuno and *Rise*, we present the Greatest Guitar Solos Of The 21st Century, where we asked TG's team of expert contributors to nominate their favourites and give us the lowdown on the secrets behind the solos. We also polled readers of guitarworld.com to have their say. Nearly 30,000 public votes were cast and you'll find the results of the poll plus our choices starting on p30.

And finally, to inspire you until next month, we have technique breakdowns of the top 10 songs, plus genre studies on the century's most important musical styles.

Anyway, as ever, I hope you enjoy the magazine. See you next month!

Chris

Chris Bird Editor

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Cover image Francesco Castaldo/Pacific Press/LightRocket via GettyImages

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Type this link into a web browser on any computer, smartphone or tablet and you'll be directed to TG's website at guitarworld.com. Here you'll find all the audio and video for the issue, available to download or stream.

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UNIVERSALLY SPEAKING

The kings of vintage gear-modelling are back with three new pedals

It's no secret that Universal Audio is adept at digitally recreating classic studio and outboard gear, and it seems that it's keeping one eye on our pedalboards. Following the release of the Dream '65, Ruby '63 and Woodrow '55 amp modelling pedals, UA has now returned its attention to effects with the Max Preamp & Dual Compressor, Del-Verb Ambience Companion and Galaxy '74 Tape Echo & Reverb.

The Max offers three compression modes (LA-2A, 1176 and Dyna Comp) plus an emulation of UA's 610 tube mic preamp. The Del-Verb offers emulations of classic delays and reverbs including vintage tape, analogue bucket-brigade and digital delay, plus a '60s valve amp spring, studio plate and a vintage digital hall algorithm.

Finally, the Galaxy '74 gives us tape echo and reverb combined with an emulation of the Roland Space Echo. There's multi-head tape delays, spring reverb, plus the added grit of the Space Echo's onboard preamp.

All three pedals are available now, priced at £325 each.

UP CLOSE

Classic gear

UA is known for its vintage emulations, as well as its own designs. Here we get vintage compressors, reverb/delay units and an emulation of the Roland RE-201 Space Echo.

Multi-modes

All three pedals contain multiple modes, accessed via the toggle switches.

App control

We're not just limited to the controls on the pedal, as these connect to the UAFX app for deeper editing.

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

ALBUM

"WE LIKE TO GO OFF THE RAILS!"

GUTHRIE GOVAN IS HITTING THE ROAD WITH THE ARISTOCRATS – AMP-FREE, AND WITH A SONG ABOUT A PENGUIN...

Guthrie Govan has just played an arena tour with soundtrack composer extraordinaire Hans Zimmer. "I've had worse jobs," he grins. This month he leads his instrumental trio The Aristocrats for a UK tour that includes some of their biggest headline shows to date, including a night at the O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire in London.

What are you most looking forward to on this run?
There's a new track from me we'll be introducing called *Sergeant Rockhopper*. People might remember the cover of our *Freeze* live album, which had three lego Aristocrats being apprehended by a giant penguin in a police helmet. I decided that character would surely be called Sergeant Rockhopper – rockhoppers, of course, being a type of penguin with the big comical yellow eyebrows. I had this picture of a penguin officer on patrol, charging around the Antarctic on his snowmobile and thought 'What would the soundtrack be to that?'

You also performed a couple of new tracks on your recent Asian tour...
We played *Aristoclub*, written by Bryan [Beller, bass] as his homage to 90s dance. Not a style we're associated with but we're always looking for new genres to corrupt and defile in an affectionate way! Bryan's demo was full of sequencers and keyboards. I was thrown for a minute and then realised it was a great opportunity for me to brush up on my Fractal programming. I went down a rabbit hole to get that sequenced gated filter working in time for a band who don't play to a click! And there's another by Marco [Minnemann, drums] called *Hey... Where's My Drink Package?* – which is polyrhythmic insanity. We all feel like we deserve a whiskey if we get to the end and magically stop at the same time!

So it sounds like you will be touring amp-free once again, with the Fractal FM9 handling pretty much everything?
That's it, plus two expression pedals. It felt like going fully digital would force me to think in new ways. I still use my Victorys in the studio. I'll have two of my signature Charvels, one in standard and the other in dropped D, going into the Fractal and coming out of one or two monitors. That's something I've learned over the last year. Sometimes we'll play and the world's biggest guitar fan will get there three hours early, standing right by my spot where the guitar amp should be but isn't. Now I have a wedge behind me so I can feel air being moved and another for the audience. No one should lose out just because I'm having fun in my digital playground!

A typical Aristocrats show tends to involve a lot of improvising. How much would be too much?
That is something we've always strived to get right, that balance between writing songs with recognisable choruses versus extended stretches using 'the force'. If we just did the jamming thing it would get old. But if we just wrote songs and played them the same every night, the audience would miss out on what makes this trio so fun – the natural chemistry we have. We can be spontaneous and fearless because we *trust* each other. We like to go off the rails, get lost and explore new territory but we're also there to help each other if it gets too bewildering.

Amit Sharma

PEDALS

FISHMAN AFX

Who says electric players should have all the fun when it comes to pedals? Not Fishman, with its newly-launched AFX range of compact acoustic pedals. There are four in the lineup including the Pocket Blender A/B/Y, Pro EQ Mini preamp/EQ, Broken Record looper/phrase sampler and Acoustiverb reverb (complete with hall, plate and spring modes). Each pedal features switchable true and buffered bypass, can be blended in parallel with your natural acoustic sound, and measure just 49 x 49 x 97mm [H x W x D]. They should be available by the time you read this, priced at £149 each.

PEDAL

WAMPLER CORY WONG COMPRESSOR

Compressors often get tarred with the mundane brush, but Funkateer Cory Wong's new Wampler signature is putting the squeeze on the specs as well as your dynamics. As well as traditional compression and controls for tailoring attack times, tone and sustain, you can blend your dry sound in for parallel-style dynamic response. But Cory has also included a two-mode boost circuit (derived from the Clapton-approved MDX Strat boost circuit) and an XLR direct output for sending your signal straight to an audio interface or PA system. What's more, you can run the boost without the compression, too! Priced £295.

AMP

REVV D25

Canadian supplier of premium high-gain tone Revv has announced the D25 (£1,799) – a combo addition to its Dynamis series – equipped with a Two Notes Torpedo. Based on the same circuit as Revv's D20 head, it's a 1x12" loaded with a Celestion V30 and driven by 6V6 valves in the power stage. The D25 is designed to work as a lower-gain standalone combo for clean and crunch sounds, or as a vehicle for your pedalboard with Revv describing it as vintaged voiced and a "perfect pedal platform". The Torpedo part serves up an XLR-powered direct out, with a collection of selectable DynIR speaker impulses. It'll be hitting these shores soon.

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THE FX FACTOR

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1 Volume
The controls are as simple as you can imagine. Volume is the loudness output from the pedal.

2 Fuzz
The fuzz control, er, controls how much fuzz is applied – and that's it! We said it was simple!

FUZZ FACE

A Hall of Fame, Hendrix-approved noise machine

The original Fuzz Face, released by Arbiter in 1966, is a masterclass in FX pedal simplicity. It has only eleven parts, across two amplifier stages, and is designed simply to create as much clipping as possible. The first units manufactured used germanium transistors. These created a warm and rich fuzz tone, but also a consistency nightmare. Legend has it that the sound changed so much from unit to unit that Jimi Hendrix would carefully audition the pedals to find one that sounded good.

Later variants kept the elegant layout, but replaced the germanium transistors for silicon. The result was a more predictable-sounding pedal, but the resulting tone change failed to wow many players. Nevertheless, one design feature has endured. The essential principle of overloading transistors to cause clipping, rather than using diodes has remained the hallmark of a whole family tree of fuzz pedals.

THE SOUND CHANGED SO MUCH FROM UNIT TO UNIT THAT HENDRIX WOULD AUDITION PEDALS TO FIND ONE THAT SOUNDED GOOD

MUST TRY... Build your 'board with these 'best in class' alternatives, available now

DEATH BY AUDIO SUPERSONIC FUZZ GUN
£259

A pedal that represents the pinnacle of fuzz audio destruction is the Supersonic Fuzz Gun. Searing noise, razor sharp leads and howling feedback are often only separated by a small turn of the controls. Just don't expect smooth vintage tones or a thick rhythm sound.

DUNLOP GERMANIUM FUZZ FACE MINI
£149

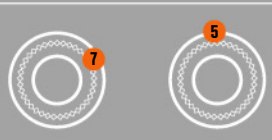
A reissue of the germanium Fuzz Face, the Dunlop retains all the exciting features of the original. Modern improvements include a more sensibly-sized enclosure, and true bypass. Maxed out, it's almost a square-wave clip, but with the fuzz backed off, it's surprisingly sensitive to playing dynamics.

Z-VEX FUZZ FACTORY VEXTER
£179

Like the Fuzz Face, the grandfather of modern boutique fuzzes is a simple beast. It's a germanium fuzz with only a handful of parts. Though the controls have names on the front panel, they're more suggestions. As bias points in the circuit, they offer wildly different results, from gentle vintage dirt to searing velcro fuzz and feedback.

SOUND ADVICE
Follow our bespoke settings to dial in three classic tones

JIMI HENDRIX LEAD
Jimi's playing was masterful, but a hint of chaos always lurked around the edges. So it is with his fuzz tone – feel free to max out that fuzz dial. The Fuzz Face can be used to push an amp into saturation, but here the goal is to lean on the pedal's clipping, and rely on the amp to add dynamic compression.



ERIC JOHNSON SMOOTH LEAD
Eric Johnson was honoured with a signature Fuzz Face, though that was a silicon model. His unit was a vintage Arbiter, and thus germanium. This makes sense, since treble is less pronounced on germanium fuzzes and Eric's violin leads came from rolling back treble across the chain. For extra compression, make sure the amp that follows is on the edge of breakup.

STACKED ALT-ROCK FUZZ
As a general rule of thumb, any fuzz pedal can be overloaded with the addition of a boost or overdrive in front. A unit like the Fuzz Face that is so responsive to playing dynamics can be pushed into extra saturation. Alternatively, placing an overdrive like the Tube Screamer after it adds additional amp-like compression and an extra kick up the midrange. Try setting the drive with level up and gain down.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ Syncopated strumming
- ✔ Lydian mode
- ✔ Layering guitars

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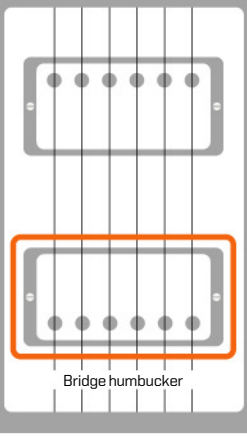
GET THE TONE CHANNEL DISTORTION



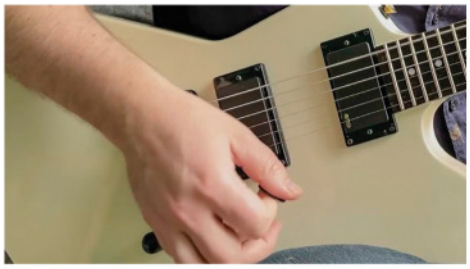
For the clean part use a tone with plenty of presence to help all the notes cut through. A flexible pick is the best option for a smooth, flowing feel to the strumming. For the distorted part pick the notes with more energy and use a thick mid-rich medium distortion tone.

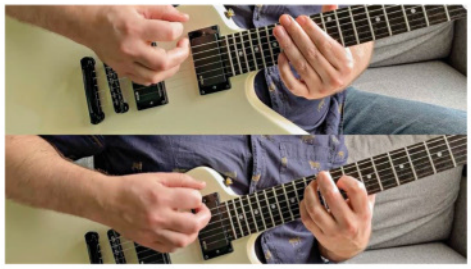
FOO FIGHTERS

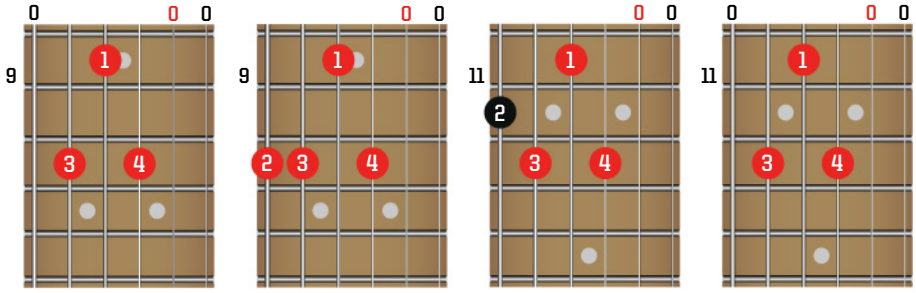
Rescued

This track is taken from the latest Foo Fighters album *But Here We Are* released in June. The intro features a two-guitar arrangement starting on lush, strummed clean chords before being joined by a heavier single-note riff. For the strummed clean part, keep your pick hand moving down and up across the strings to play the rhythm. Use your first, third and fourth fingers to play the shape at the 9th fret, then move the shape two frets higher up the neck. As you play each chord, allow the open first and second strings to ring throughout. Make sure you add the sixth-string notes with your second finger at the 11th and 12th frets, respectively. For the heavy riff, you'll be playing the open sixth string plus notes at the 11th, 12th, 14th and 16th frets. Watch our video to see how both parts work together.

CHEAT SHEET...
Appears at: 0:00-0:26
Tempo: 148bpm
Key/scale: E Lydian mode
Main techniques: Strumming, open strings, single-note riffing







Essentially there are two chords to learn here, but each is played over two different bass notes, giving you four shapes in total. Keep an eye out to make sure you hit the right bass notes – they're at the 11th and 12th frets. The single-note riff played on the sixth string employs only four notes (D#, E, F# and G#), however, factoring in the notes from the chords and taking E as the tonal centre, the song is in E Lydian (E F# G# A# B C# D#).

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FIVE WAYS TO...

START PLAYING JAZZ

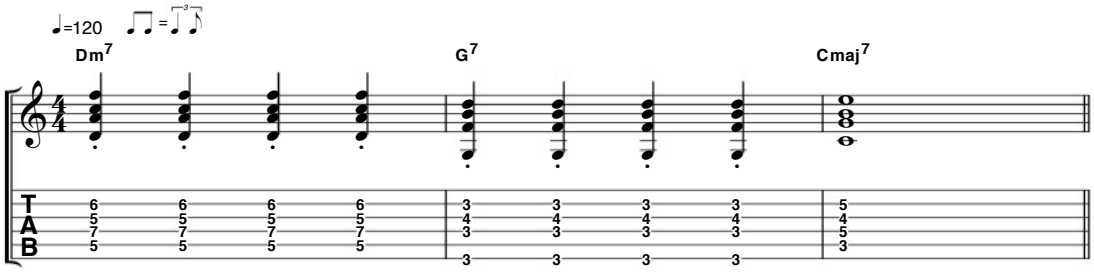
Despite its reputation, playing jazz doesn't have to be scary

You may have heard that jazz musicians artfully play 'wrong' notes. However, if you just play at random frets you'll probably sound more like a crashed train than Coltrane. A better way to think about it is as 'tension and release': notes that clash with the underlying chord create tension, while notes from within the chord release that tension for a sweeter sound. Advanced jazz players might extend that tension for quite a while, but a safe starting place is to resolve each tense note by immediately following it with one from inside the chord. Play these 'chord tones' on the beat and your tense 'outside' notes off the beat to add colour to your licks without losing the plot. Choose outside notes one fret either side of chord tones: they create the maximum amount of tension but they also create flowing lines where the notes move smoothly.

To do this confidently, you'll need to learn some arpeggios – that's when you play the notes of a chord one by one. Learning arpeggios will give you confidence about where the chord tones are, and you can then add outside notes without getting lost. Many jazz standards are built around II–V–I chord progressions (more on that shortly!), so learning how to play over these changes is a good start.

Another approach is to add jazz ideas to your existing blues vocabulary. Example 5 across the page uses jazz note choices in a standard I–IV progression in E (E7–A7). A common jazz move here is to insert a B♭7 just before moving to the IV chord (A7). Even if the band doesn't play that, you can create that flavour by playing a B♭7 arpeggio for two beats just before the chord changes to A7. You'll create tension that you can resolve by landing on an A note as the chord changes.

1 LEARN YOUR 7TH CHORDS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Jazz makes heavy use of extended chords, including 9ths and 13ths, but the place to start is with 7ths – so try the shapes shown here. This II-V-I (two-five-one) chord progression is a building block of jazz, taking its name because the chords are built on the second, fifth and first notes of the key. Here we're in C major (C D E F G A B), so the II-V-I follows D, G and C root notes.

Words, guitars and backing Jenna Scaramanga

2 LEARN A WALKING BASSLINE

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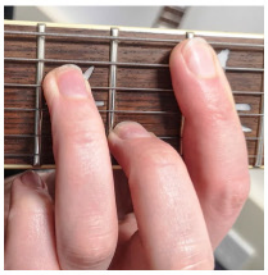

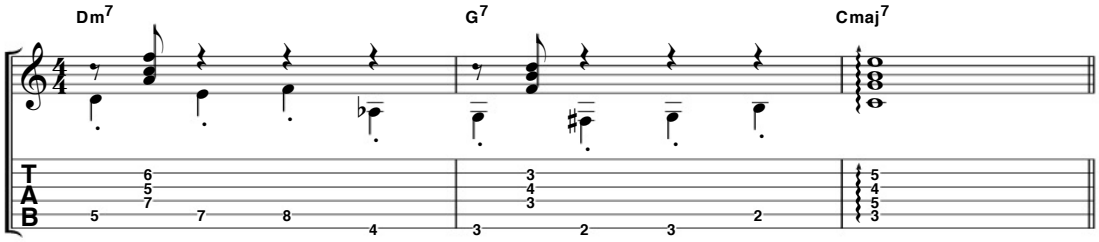

This line works on the same principle of tension and release: the bassline hits the root notes of the chords on the downbeats, and tense 'outside' notes on the weaker beats 2 and 4. This style of playing can be a routed into chord-melody playing *à la* Joe Pass.

3 LEARN YOUR ARPEGGIOS

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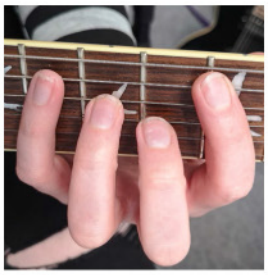

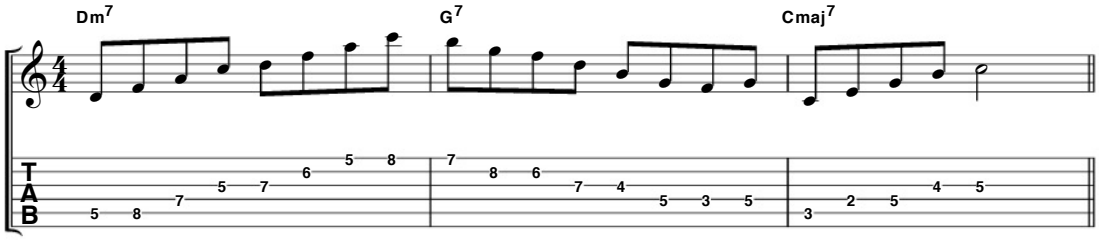

Because resolving tension is so central to jazz, you always need to know where the sweeter sounding 'right' notes are. Learning arpeggios for the chords you're playing over will mean you always know how to get out of trouble.

4 LEARN A II-V-I LICK

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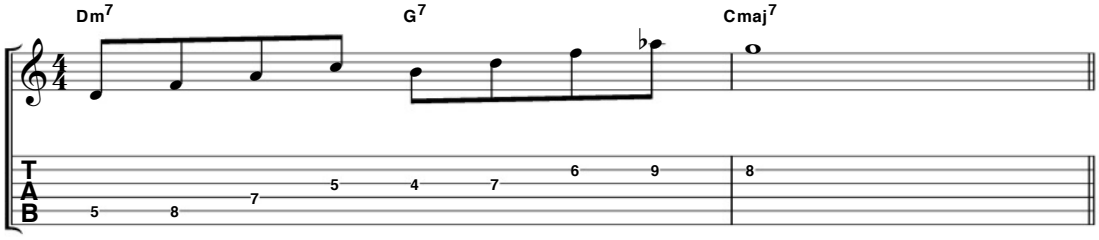

This classic II-V-I line exclusively uses chord tones until the last note of bar 1. This 'outside' A♭ note moves down one fret to G as the chord changes to Cmaj7. G is a note in the Cmaj7 chord, so it resolves sweetly.

5 ADD 'OUTSIDE' NOTES TO BLUES LICKS

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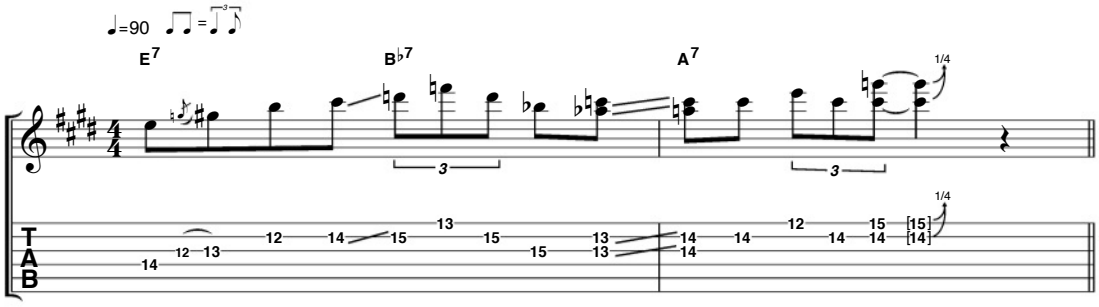


This lick is played over bars 4 and 5 of a standard 12-bar blues pattern, as the chord moves from I to IV. It is common to approach the IV chord from a fret above, so you can play a B♭7 arpeggio to imply that change into A7.

LOVELY BONES
IOL and friend. From left: Daniel Alvarez Giraldo, Karim Newble, Linus Munch

Words Jonathan Horsley

"WE'RE BORROWING AMPS FOR EVERY SHOW"

Island Of Love are signed to Jack White's label, but the band's two guitarists are still hustling for gear in the pursuit of ear-bleeding volume

Island Of Love are a band with a wide dynamic range, big songs, big hooks and all the volume in the world, but none of the gear. They've made it this far without the latter. That has become a thing, an in-joke. To say you are "Island Of Lovin' it" is to say you show up at a show with a setlist and in desperate need of a loan – a guitar or maybe an amp to get the job done. This is *de rigueur* in the hardcore circles that guitarist/vocalists Karim Newble and Linus Munch moved in before putting Island Of Love together, but it is unbecoming of a band who were the first to be signed to Third Man London, part of Jack White's empire. With that comes a certain expectation. "When we started rehearsing it we didn't even have a fuzz pedal, and amps are definitely the next step for us," says Linus. "We are still borrowing amps every single show."

There is something about this absence of planning and preparation that is in keeping with how their self-titled debut tumbles out the speakers to ingratiate itself in the ear as though by accident. It's music written in a key and from a perspective where we'd all like to live. Nothing sounds overworked. The sad songs sound happy. The happy songs sound sad. All of them are a bit of both. Throughout is the sound of organic fuzz and drive – 70s brown, earth-tone corduroy, autumn leaves – and you can't really decide whether this is a lost-and-found recording of 90s alt-rock or a record of now. Or even which side of the Atlantic you would find Island Of Love. They are out of time, out of place. When the album's opening song *Big Whale* barrels out, your first thought might be Dinosaur Jr, and the US alternative rock canon. Other times there is no denying which island they're from.

"NEIL YOUNG'S LEADS ARE INCREDIBLE – LIKE THEY COULD COME APART AT ANY MOMENT" LINUS MUNCH

"Definitely, we are all really big fans of guitar music in general," says Karim. "For me personally, it was a lot of the Seattle and outside of Seattle, the bordering scene. Built To Spill was always a big one, and for Linus it is more big, proper 70s stuff. On top of that, me and Linus – and Dan [Alvarez Giraldo, bassist] – bonded over love of really overtly British stuff, like The Cribs and The Maccabees, very British indie music. It's a combination of all that."

That their sound is a dialogue between both cultural perspectives is not radical in and of itself. There has always been that cross-pollination between both Anglophone nations. Way back it was Little Richard and The Beatles. In the indie era, you could hear the US influence on Johnny Marr's guitar even in the quintessentially English sounds of The Smiths. Island Of Love are no different in that sense, and they too make something that's all their own. The wild, falling-apart guitar volume of Neil Young was magnetic north for Linus. "Neil Young's leads are just incredible, like they could come apart at any moment," Linus says. "He'll put feedback where he wants it."

For Karim it is Rick Maguire from Pile, Steve Hartlett from Ovlov, and J Mascis, too. You can hear these cats in the Island Of Love sound. But buried beneath, underpinning it all, is a sensibility Karim gleaned from legendary US acoustic pickers such as John Fahey and Michael Hurley. There's country there, too. *Weekend At Clive's* leans into that steel-string renegade vibe, serving as an unaccompanied acoustic interlude before we get all tangled up in the bittersweet jangle of Charles. "A lot of stuff starts as a swung country song and then we find a way to make it four-to-the-floor," says Karim.

Much of their writing is done at home, on acoustic, before presenting the song to the rest of the band ready to be augmented with bass solos, guitar solos, or even guitar harmonies that call to mind Thin Lizzy signed by Sub Pop. There's a freedom to the recording that suggests the next time you hear these songs on a stage that they might have changed a little, that they might change a little from night to night depending on how the energy in the room is.

Before Island Of Love started as a going concern, the pair would confer at Karim's mum's house and find a poppier repository for all that hardcore punk energy they had. What if they could write hooks?

"We literally would be plugging straight in and using amp VSTs and plugins and throwing an overdrive on it and being like, 'Oh cool, that's finished,'" Karim says. "When we actually started jamming as a band it was just crazy hearing them without a robot drumming, and hearing it being real in a room. It's that whole Dinosaur Jr ethos of playing ear-bleeding country music. We love Sunn O))) and just crazy, grungy loud music. It is nice to bring a pop sensibility into that kind of world."

That sound, the band, all came together in Fuzzbrain, an east London studio run by Ben Spence, who ended up producing the album after pretty much introducing them to every sound they would need to write, perform and ultimately record these songs. When Linus and Karim join us over video link they are at the Fuzzbrain. It's central to their story.

"We literally all met here, all different ages, all playing in the same band and then just being in a similar scene, and trying to find people who are good at playing stuff," says Karim. "You just bond over loving music and not knowing how to play it but having a space that gives you all the tools, all of the instruments. We didn't even have to bring guitars, amps or leads. We just showed up and I'd say to Ben, 'Oh, I've heard about this pedal, the Memory Man.' And the next time I would see him he would have a Memory Man."

Volume is key. That's the emulsifier bringing all of this together. It makes the guitars sing. It works with the heartbreak songs. There is no better shield against feelings of romantic inadequacy than ear-piercing volume. Those who enjoy feedback will get more out of an Island Of Love live show than those who don't. If you come along, bring a guitar, just in case. Karim says they're working on it. He provided someone a bit of art and in exchange they gave him a red Kramer Baretta that's now his number one live guitar. "I would love to get some weird John Dwyer-like, metal, crazy-looking guitar," he says.

ISLAND LIFE
The boys at work and play

On record, Linus used a Flying V. Live, he'll be on the Jazzmaster. On record, Karim ran through British-style amps, Marshalls, while Linus used US amps. When they go on tour this summer their Spanish driver will hook them up with some amps. All of them will be cranked. There will be no dead air. If the amplifiers aren't pushed into the feedback then it'll be Karim's broken guitar tuner screaming whenever he tries to return a string to pitch. Rock music, lest we forget, is after all an enterprise run on electricity. There's something Nikola Tesla about having all that voltage and current to manipulate; there is a certain magic in the power to push air through a speaker cone, one that is not lost on Island Of Love.

"I have been leaning towards the idea of us getting huge stacks and playing onstage with them, and just having the option of cranking the stacks so you don't have to worry about mic'ing them," says Karim, warming to the theme. "There's always the worry about not getting enough guitar. We have always been really anti noise-gating. I think it's kind of nice when you are playing through a setup that sounds like it could explode. That makes it way more exciting. It makes it feel like you're really rocking out!"

Sure, the sound engineers hate them. There will be those who turn up at an Island Of Love performance only to be repelled by the two minutes of feedback that greets their arrival onstage like an astringent palate-cleanser. The Melvins used to do that sort of thing and use strobe-lighting. You have to get the audience's attention somehow. Coming from hardcore, Karim is not so sure how to read the Island Of Love audience. "It is hard to feed off it when you come from bands who people beat each other up to the music," he says. They'll deal with it the way they deal with any emotion. There is no plan, except this: "Play as loud as possible, have fun with it, and throw lots of goofy, warped solos in there…"

Island Of Love is out now.

"PLAY AS LOUD AS POSSIBLE, AND THROW LOTS OF GOOFY, WARPED SOLOS IN THERE" KARIM NEWBLE

MESA/BOOGIE

Gibson

Words Ellie Rogers

"IT'S CRAZY, BUT

Inside the weird world of **Tigercub** – catchy songs, 'stinky' riffs and oddball experiments in tone building

As purveyors of abyssal drop-tuned riffs, grizzly tones and unsettlingly spiky leads, there has never been anything soft or cuddly about the Tigercub sound – despite what the name might suggest. And their third album, *The Perfume Of Decay*, sees the Brighton-based trio becoming a fully grown, snarling beast of a band.

"The manifesto going in was to be as big and as unapologetic as we could," explains Jamie Hall – the seven-foot-tall, self-described "weird dude" who masterminds the band's ever-enthralling creative output in his capacities as guitarist, songwriter, frontman and producer. "I am who I am, and I just have to try and let my personality come through on whatever I'm trying to do," he smiles.

Jamie's penchant for juxtaposing soft but sinister lullaby vocals against colossal riffs has led to frequent comparisons with Queens Of The Stone Age leader Josh Homme. "It's so hard not to get compared to other guitar players," Jamie says. But he has a theory as to what makes his band such a stand out in the somewhat overcrowded 'detuned rock space'. "There's a lot of wrong-footing people in Tigercub songs," he explains. "Every so often it'll go a little bit weird, but it does have that ultimate accessibility. That's just who we are."

It's an intoxicatingly sweet and sour blend that also caught the ear of Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, landing the band a deal with his label, Loosegroove Records – the very same label that brought the world Queens Of The Stone Age's debut way back in 1998. Acutely aware that the signing would likely expose the band to a much bigger audience, and with sights set on conquering America with album three, Jamie set about upping his game in every way possible. "I wanted to make something that could really own the attention we're getting," he stresses. The biggest challenge, as he puts it, was: "How do we grow and how do we allow ourselves to appeal to a wider audience, while staying true to who we are, and not chasing popularity and becoming a sh*t band because of it?"

As a songwriter, Jamie has always instinctively leaned towards catchy songs. "I like to have the chorus come in quick and for the song to be finished in two and a half to four minutes," he says. But among the radio-friendly elements – designed to be enjoyed at high volume while cruising on long car journeys, just as the band did while touring North America last year – he weaves plenty of idiosyncrasies and displays of technical ability into the music to keep listeners on their toes. He says of the new album's title track: "*The Perfume Of Decay* really is a unique and bizarre lead line. It's sort of chromatic but not, and it's so hard to play because there's loads of string skipping and fingerpicking to be done." He adds with a smile: "I'm really pleased that I've managed to have something that's getting pushed out to this many people. That's so f*cking bonkers!"

Elsewhere on the album, Deftones-inspired chuggery meets shoegazing noise swells, and further sonic inspirations sprawl from the Études of Chopin to the 1990s doom metal scene, via the classic sounds of Jimmy Page and Tony Iommi. And at the crux of it all lies Jamie's own gutsy guitar tone.

On 2021 album *As Blue As Indigo*, he'd relied on a Fender Jaguar HH and a selection of "traditional old-school amps" – like the Hiwatt Custom 50, WEM Dominator and Vox AC30 – for his densely layered, angular sound. Nowadays,

> "I USED A WAH-WAH PEDAL, SO IT WAS FULL GUNS N' ROSES TERRITORY. PROPER 80S!"

IT WORKS!"

EYE OF THE TIGER
Jamie Hall, Tigercub leader and self-described "weird dude"

HELLO CLEVELAND! With his latest gear choices, Jamie says he went "full Spinal Tap"

Photo Getty

he has endorsements with modern builders like Chapman Guitars and Victory Amps, and likes to use an ML3 Pro – lightly modded with the addition of a Seymour Duncan Hot Rails – in combination with one of Victory's compact, tour-friendly V4s while out on the road.

But for *The Perfume Of Decay*, he tells us that he "went full Spinal Tap" to achieve the monstrous, in-your-face rock sound that characterises the record. "It was an 80s Gibson Les Paul into an old Marshall JCM800 into a 4x12 – with everything on f*cking 10 – mic'd up with a '57. I realised I've spent my entire life as a guitarist resisting this because it's just 'the done thing,'" he laughs, before supplying a sage maxim for gearheads to live by: "You should always use your ears. Whatever sounds the best is the best. We could've used something off the beaten track like a Selmer head – which I did use on *As Blue As Indigo* and it was really cool – but it didn't get me to the finish line nearly as quickly or effectively. I even used a wah-wah pedal, so it was full Guns N' Roses territory. It was proper 80s!"

But the album doesn't sound remotely like a hair metal throwback because Jamie's off-kilter sonic leanings are still stamped upon it with a few choice layers of what he describes as supplementary "tone building". He explains: "I was trying to take something classic and then attenuate it with something really weird. You've got the insurance policy of having something tried and tested that just sounds great. Then I was trying to make that my own by adding in some extra weirder elements."

"WHEN YOU HIT A STRING TUNED LOW, IT'S SUPER VIBEY"

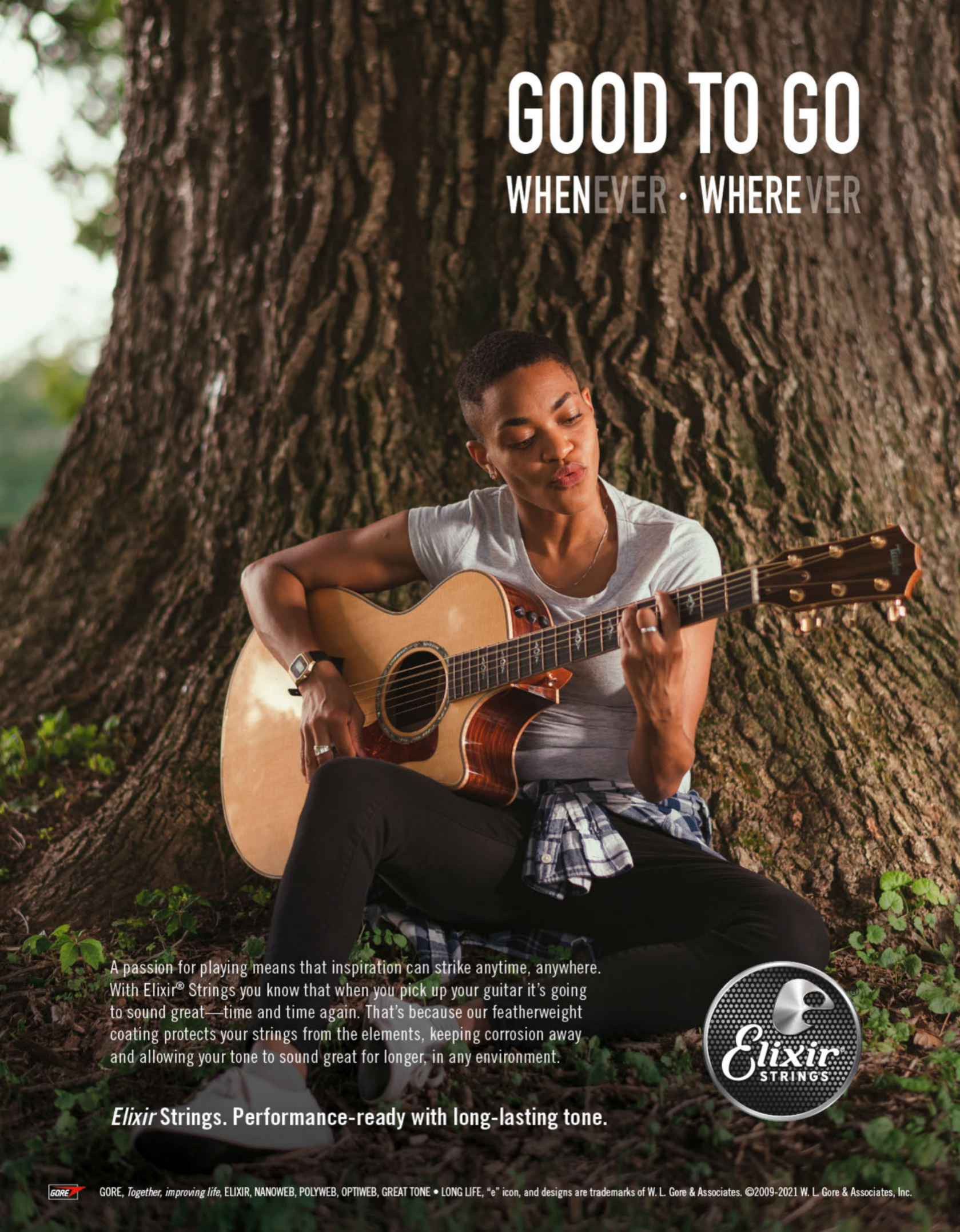
One of the weirdest elements of all involved mic'ing up "random, no-name transistor amps" with headphones – yes, headphones – and mixing in the tones. "If you get your headphones and you plug them into the input of your interface, the actual earphone will become a microphone that captures the sound. It's crazy, but it works!" According to Jamie, it's a technique that Dave Sardy used while working with Marilyn Manson, and even one that The Beatles dabbled with. "I was nerding out loads before we went into the studio," Jamie says, having taken on the responsibilities of producer. "It makes me better at what I do if I understand the history of music and the lineage, and how equipment and technology has a tangible influence on how records are made and how they sound."

Another secret of his tone comes from DI-ing guitars straight into a console preamp. "That makes up a large part of my tone on record to get the nasal, gacky top end," he reveals. "I was running the guitar into a Boss Metal Zone, then into an API preamp. It gave this really funny tone that kind of sounds like Daft Punk because it's got so much attack and fizz."

A Tigercub record wouldn't be a Tigercub record if it wasn't stacked with impossibly low tunings. "My guitar is essentially a baritone at this point," Jamie laughs. "The tuning is like C standard – so that's C-F-A-D-G-C – but I'll drop the E string to A, so it's sort of like drop D. I really like how the guitar behaves in that tuning," he enthuses, explaining that he also selects heavy Dunlop bass picks to give maximum surface area contact when he attacks. "When you hit a string and it's tuned low, there's all these little inconsistencies with the pitch. To my ears, it's just super vibey."

Then, for what he terms "the stinkiest riffs" – and as you'd expect, there are noxious riffs aplenty on *The Perfume Of Decay* – he plunges to even greater depths. "I think *Play My Favourite Song* is a drop G tuning," he reveals. "I haven't told anyone that yet, so *Total Guitar* is getting the scoop!"

***The Perfume Of Decay* is out now.**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Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths **Photo** Joby Sessions

CHORD COLOURS

Tap into the 'emotional' side of your playing and expand your chord knowledge!

It's an inescapable fact that most of our time playing guitar is spent on rhythm duties. So, whether you play in a band, write your own songs or just like to jam around some favourite tunes, you need to know a good number of chords. The best way to get some new shapes under your belt is to get a feel for the character and mood of each chord – yes, we're talking about emotions! Figuring out the 'feeling' of new chords is a shortcut to getting the sound in your head onto your guitar's fretboard.

Each chord type has its own sound. So, for example, it's possible to train your ear to identify the trademark mellow sound of major 7ths, the ambiguous 'neither major nor minor' vibe of suspended chords, and so on. But there are other factors, too. Employ open strings for resonance and richness. Mute out a bass string to remove bottom-end muddiness. Get creative with arpeggios and bring new life to shapes that sound dissonant when played as chords.

Read on, then, as we look at some of the tricks of the trade and hopefully you'll pick up a few new shapes to add to your arsenal along the way. Right, let's get strumming!

1 GET IT SUSSED

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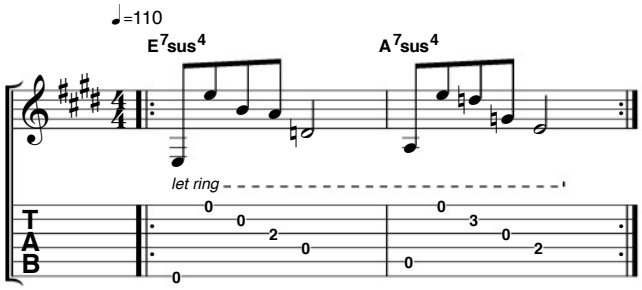
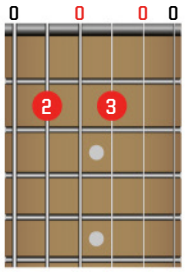
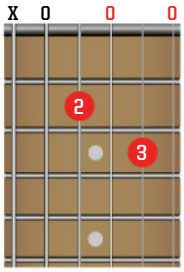




E7sus4



A7sus4

We begin with the unresolved sound of the 7sus4 chord, here in an ambient progressive line. Keep your pick attack uniform so that the notes are the same volume.

2 ADDED WEIGHT

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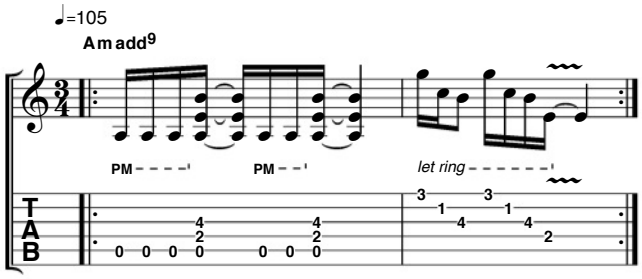
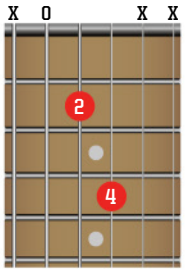
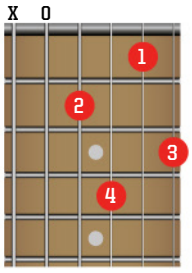




Amadd9 (low strings)



Amadd9

Listen to the dissonant sound of the minor add9 chord in this metal riff. We're playing it here first on the low strings then as an arpeggion on the higher strings.

Photo Will Ireland

3 FUSION RUN

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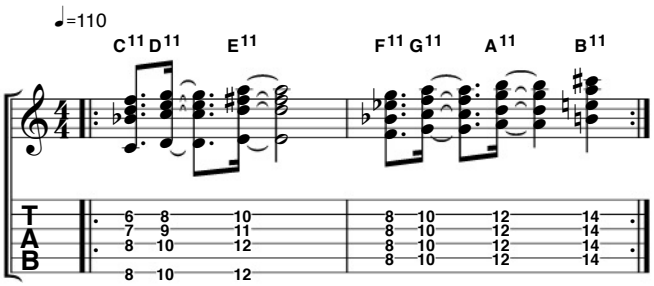

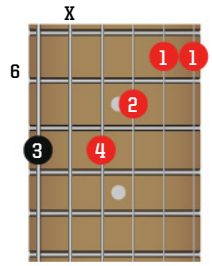

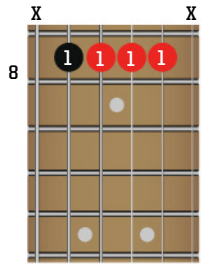

There's a mellow but upbeat vibe to the dominant 11 chords here in our jazz-fusion line. Take care with the 'pushed feel', where the chords change before the downbeat.

4 MELLOW MINOR CHORDS

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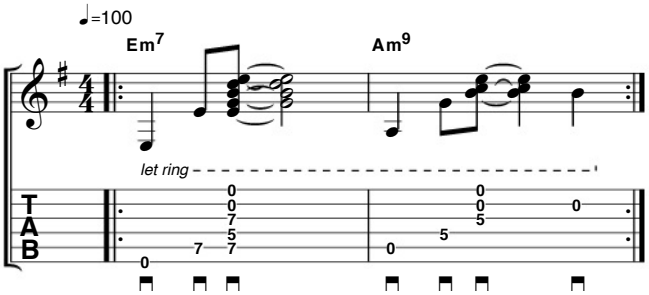

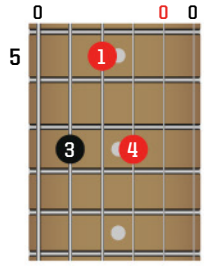

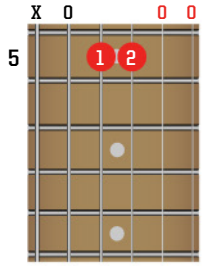

This example shows how open strings can add richness and space to your sound as they ring out against fretted notes.

5 SIX, SEVEN, NINE, ELEVEN

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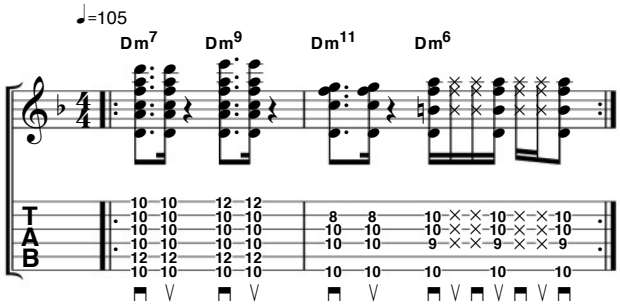

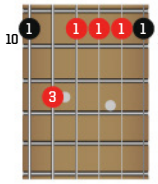

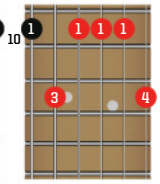

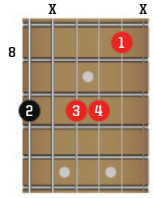

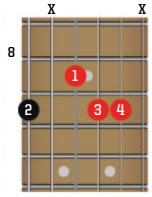

This line runs through four extended minor chords – so try to pick up on the mood of each one. These chords can bring colour to any progression.

6 MMM, NICE!

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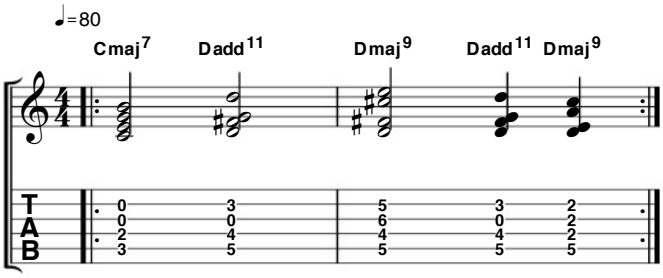

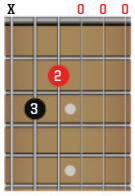

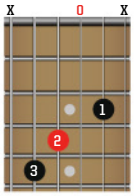

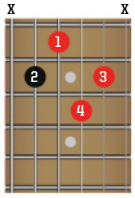

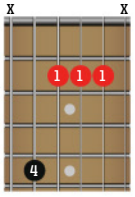

Notice the relaxed maj7 and maj9 chords and the rich add11 sound. Make the second-string melody clear by emphasising this string with each pick stroke.

7 POPULAR FOLK

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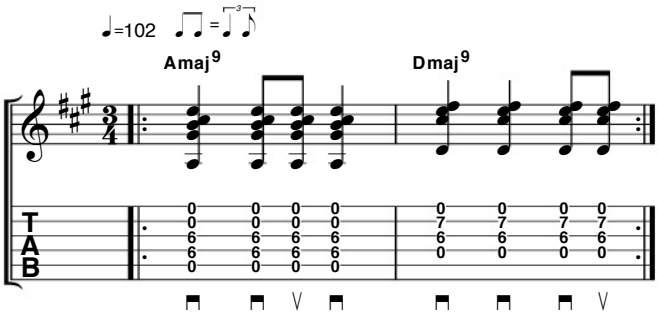
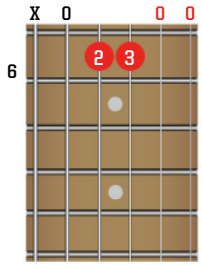
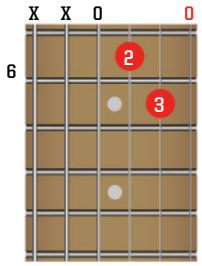




Amaj9



Dmaj9

This acoustic folk-pop line uses open strings to create 'clusters' of notes for a piano-like effect. Try adding in a few sus2 or sus4 chords.

8 FOUR FAB CHORDS

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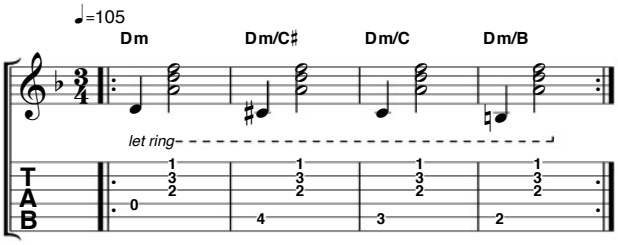
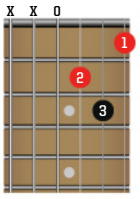
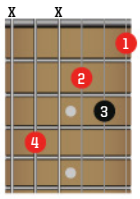
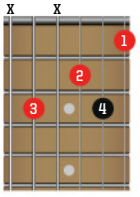




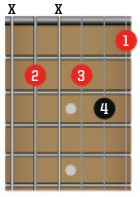
Dm



Dm/C#



Dm/C



Dm/B

This Beatles-style part uses slash chords to create a bassline below a Dm. The Dm doesn't change, but the bass notes do. Ingenious!

9 VIVA LA GUITARRA!

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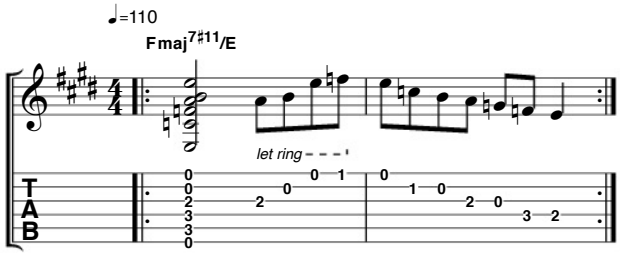
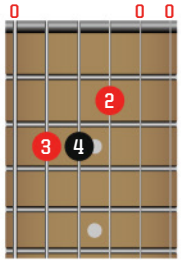
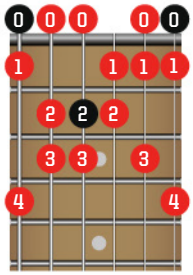




Fmaj7#11/E



E Phrygian Dominant mode

The Latin-flavoured Fmaj7#11/E chord and the lick that follows come from the E Phrygian Dominant mode (E F G# A B C D).

10 KING OF THE CHORDS

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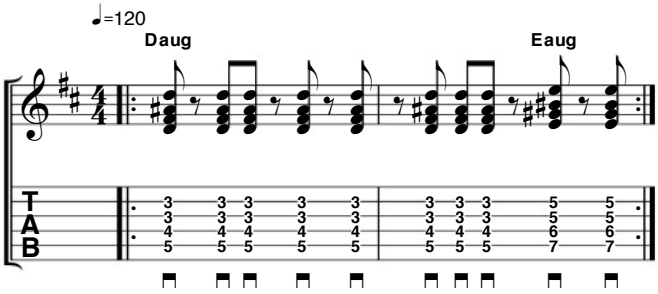
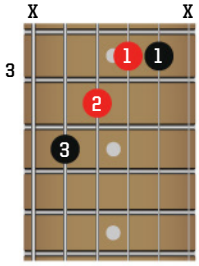
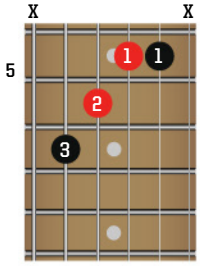




Daug



Eaug

The clashing augmented chord is spot on for this modern take on a King Crimson-style riff. Although there are several offbeat chords, we're downpicking throughout.

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THE *Solos* ISSUE

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THE 30 GREATEST GUITAR SOLOS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Featuring every kind of guitar hero - from old-school to cutting-edge. And not one but two Van Halens...

30

MR. ED

MAMMOTH WVH

(2021)

We wondered whether Wolfgang Van Halen would steer clear of tapping to avoid comparisons with his dad, but Mammoth WVH's opening song gave a clear answer. Pointedly titled *Mr. Ed*, it exploded onto the stage with tapped harmonics and a sequence based on the *Hot For Teacher* patterns. Wolfgang keeps alive the family tradition of sounding like he's falling down the stairs and landing on his feet; the opening tapped harmonics ring with such force you can *feel* the string thumping against the fretwire. Wolf beats out a quarter-note triplet with his tapping finger and fits the rest of the phrase into the gaps, another family secret. We're just glad there's still a Van Halen lighting up the fingerboard.

29

SLITHER
VELVET REVOLVER

(2004)

Signalled by the crack of a snare drum, the jewel in Velvet Revolver's debut has Slash at his Slashiest: full of nonchalant swagger and absolutely bristling to destroy 16 bars in the spotlight with a blazing wah-fest. As with a great majority of his solos, this one's built from blues-inspired licks, sped up and fed through a hard rock filter – and a cranked Marshall amp. Limber alternate picking and hammer-on/pull-off patterns allow him one to build up speed around the D minor pentatonic shape that the solo calls home. But, much of that signature sound comes through at the apex of his bends, where a muscular vibrato and some furious Cry Baby action imparts attitude in buckets.

28

LAST NITE
THE STROKES

(2001)

In the solo-less wasteland that was the early noughties, Albert Hammond Jr. gave us this absolute pearl. At the time we were grateful for any scraps we could get, but *Last Nite* still sounds great 20 years later, a shining example of the solo you can sing. Simple without being simplistic, Hammond creates hooks by repeating ideas with slight variations. The punk rock snarl comes from playing C minor pentatonic over a C major chord sequence, and the tremolo picked doublestops at the end build to a fine frenzy while keeping the loose vibe going. Hammond is a big fan of his Strat's middle pickup, but contemporary footage shows him on his bridge pickup for *Last Nite*, the switch possibly knocked by his furious picking hand.

27

I LET MY GUITAR DO THE TALKING
BUDDY GUY

(2022)

If you're searching for evidence to suggest that Strats and Cry Babys could hold the secret to eternal youth, then look no further. Cut when the living legend of Chicago blues was 86 years young, this wah-fuelled, funked-flavoured throwdown does exactly as its title suggests at every given opportunity in what is surely one of the most life-affirming lead guitar performances of the century. With bluesy licks throughout, Buddy delivers a no-holds-barred workout, showing off just how athletically he can still get about the fretboard. His signature Dunlop BG95 Cry Baby helps conjure up oodles of open vowel-like sounds, while Buddy's peerless phrasing humanises that talking Strat of his even further.

26

IT'S A MOOT POINT
MELANIE FAYE

(2020)

In the viral videos that made her name, the then 19-year-old Faye sat beneath a Hendrix poster delivering jazzy chord-melody neo soul parts. For *It's a Moot Point*, she makes Hendrix-like use of octave effects, but the phrasing is entirely her own: surprising, staccato phrases that weave together to create a killer melody. It helps that she has built herself both a deep groove and a beautiful chord progression to play over, so her rhythmic invention feels perfect, and she can really make the most of the chord changes underneath. Since being rocketed to social media fame, Faye has released only one EP, but this outstanding display of musicality has everything we love about R'n'B guitar.

25

GHOSTS
BIG WRECK

(2001)

Supposedly, after Albert King heard David Bowie's *Let's Dance*, he told Stevie Ray Vaughan: "I heard you on the radio, playing my licks." If SRV could hear *Ghosts*, he might say something similar to Big Wreck's Ian Thornley. The note choice, use of space, tone, and vibrato are all straight from Stevie's *Let's Dance* playbook, and it's done so well we'd never dream of complaining. At 2:52, Thornley pulls out a sly diminished run that reveals his Berklee College of Music roots. This flash of jazz sets up the outro solo, with its fatter tone and frequent use of outside notes. But while the expensive notes scratch our brains, it's the epic vibrato that blooms into feedback at 5:35 that really raises goosebumps.

24

MIDNIGHT IN HARLEM
TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

(2011)

Widely hailed as the greatest slide guitarist on the planet, Derek Trucks' soulful outro solo in *Midnight In Harlem* is exemplary for its expressive storytelling capabilities. The phrase, "It's not what you play, but how you play it," rings true as Trucks uses everything at his fingertips to up the emotional stakes and bring the track home in tear-jerking style. With his guitar tuned to open E, he expands upon touchstone phrases in different areas of the neck to bring out different tones, building up momentum before taking a climactic trip to the fretboard's edge. For that untouchably pure tone, Trucks relies on his Gibson SGs, boutique tube amps and glass medicine bottle slides.

23

SHE'LL CHANGE
MOLLY TUTTLE

(2021)

Bluegrass has always been blessed with astonishing flatpickers, and Molly Tuttle is the latest and greatest of them. As fleet and agile as a gazelle, Molly weaves playfully around the song's melody, simultaneously tuneful and terrifying. The *Crooked Tree* album saw Molly returning to stripped-down bluegrass roots, and her open-string ideas show her mastery of the genre. As the solo works up through the fretboard, she blurs the line between strumming and crosspicking at points. Unlike some crosspickers who rest their fingers on the body, Molly's picking hand floats freely, and she gets a broader range of tones because she can easily change where she is picking mid-phrase.

22

DRIVE HOME
STEVEN WILSON FT. GUTHRIE GOVAN

(2013)

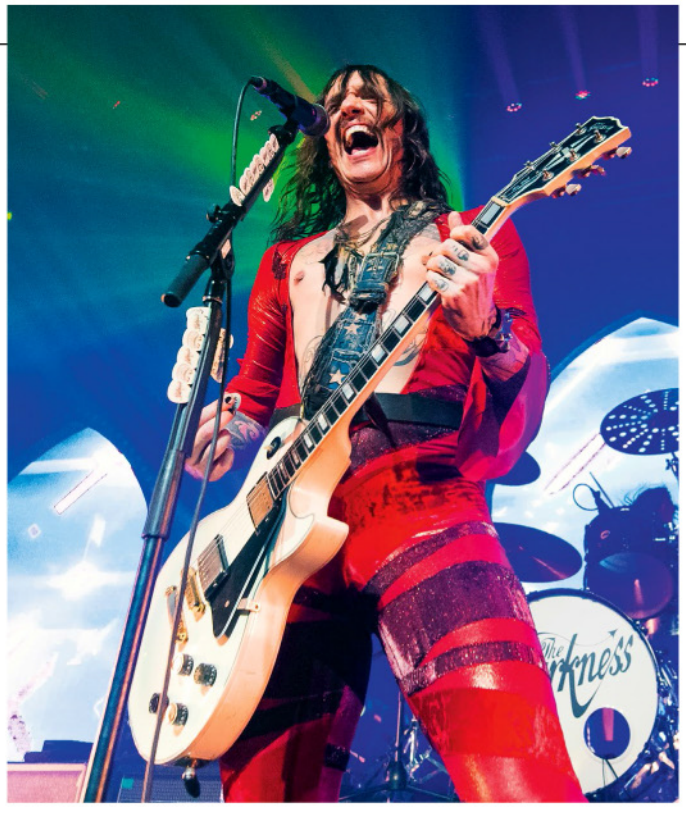
Guthrie Govan has created many of the greatest solos released over the last two decades, but it's on Steven Wilson's track *Drive Home* that he showcases his more minimalistic side. "I remember Steven saying he imagined a guitar solo that was 'soaring'," Guthrie told TG. "That was the only adjective I got and started thinking about ways to do that. I used one of Steven's guitars, which I'd never played before, because it had a sustainer pickup in it, and after having fun with it for a few minutes I asked, 'Can I use this for my solo, just to see what happens?' So I did. I insisted on doing about 90 takes as I always do, and everyone loved take one, so that's what you hear on the record."

21

OUT IN THE OPEN
BUTCH WALKER

(2020)

Butch rarely goes in for guitar histrionics, whether on his own albums or the ones he's produced for the likes of Fall Out Boy and Weezer, but he went in blazing this time. The song is already emotional by the time the solo begins, and Butch releases it all in a stunning catharsis. Starting from sparse phrases with plenty of space, over the course of a minute Walker shows he is equally adept at crafting guitar melodies as vocal ones. He builds to a cascading legato run that wouldn't disgrace Andy Timmons, and he's still not done. As the track fades, he emphasises long, crying bends and melodic phrases enhanced by his tasteful use of delay. We think Walker should put solos on more of his records.



20

THE DARKNESS
I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE

(2003)

A noughties glam rock classic with two huge solos

A perfect pair of guitar-toting siblings, much like their heroes in AC/DC, Justin and Dan Hawkins have very different personalities both in person and on guitar. There are a number of songs which allow for comparisons to be drawn, and none better than breakout hit *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*, which saw them go head-to-head over its two main solos.

It's younger brother Dan who first steps up to the challenge after the second chorus, running through some E major scale ideas around the bottom of the neck before heading up higher for some unison bends and bluesy ideas around the 9th fret – which would be the relative minor pentatonic three frets down from the major position found at the 12th fret. Dan is typically known as the less flamboyant persona out of the pair, and his contributions are more laid-back than Justin's solo, which begins after the final chorus and lives in more of a bluesy world.

Justin starts his solo with a minor 7th to octave bend up at the 15th fret, also harmonised up a major 3rd before some minor pentatonic lines around the 12th fret. Then there's a climbing run on the high E, fretting notes from the E major scale while pedalling against the open string, starting down at the 4th fret and eventually ending at the very top of his black Les Paul Standard's neck on the 22nd fret where there's one final whole tone bend up to the root. This kind of single-string idea can also be heard on tracks like AC/DC's *Thunderstruck* and Iron Maiden's *Wasted Years*, and is an effective tool for making something sound a lot more complicated than it actually is, allowing guitarists to incorporate some wide intervallic leaps against what often tends to be the key centre.

For the outro of the song, the band head back into the main riff – which is built off the first six notes of the E major scale, and then there's one final flurry of notes from Justin using hammer-ons and pull-offs before its closing stab. Neither solo would sound quite as good without the other, which is what makes this track such an enduring celebration of their contrasting yet perfectly complementary personalities as musicians.

"I enjoy listening to Dan's lead work because he does things that I'd never think of," Justin once told TG. "He probably likes my stuff for the same reason. We know how to enjoy each other's playing and not see it as a competition. It's all about whatever's best for the song, and it takes a while to learn that I think. Make sure the song works, otherwise nobody will listen and it might be totally pointless."

19

LITTLE PRETTY
STEVE VAI

(2022)

The standout track from last year's *Inviolate* album, *Little Pretty* is notable for many reasons, perhaps firstly for the American guitar hero ditching the Ibanez models he's most associated with for a very different kind of guitar – a Gretsch hollowbody. And though there's no whammy bar to abuse, that doesn't stop Vai from pulling magic out of the proverbial hat, playing to each chord in a stunning display of slippery slides, powerful bends and fusion-esque ideas. Most impressively of all is how he links all these different passages into something unique and coherent, snaking through the changes with effortless ease and fearless bravado. Nearly five decades into his career, he's still melting minds.

18

IN REPAIR
JOHN MAYER

(2006)

Every tune on the *Continuum* album is bursting with the kind of tastefully minimalist soloing that inspired a whole new generation of 'feel' players, but *In Repair* houses some of Mayer's most delicious and most under-celebrated licks of all time. After setting up the track's experimental organ-like tones with the help of an EHX POG and a Line 6 DL4 Delay Modeler, Mayer looked to the tried and true tones of his heavily relic'd 'Black One' Strat for the expertly-paced, soulful main solo. The icing on the blues-pop cake comes in the final minute as Mayer layers sweet Allman Brothers-style guitarmonies with yet more devastatingly slick improv work to send the outro soaring into the ether.

17

WINDOWPANE
OPETH

(2003)

Opeth leader Mikael Åkerfeldt made a bold move with the band's 2003 album *Damnation*, eschewing their death metal roots for 70s prog rock worship – as illustrated by the opening track *Windowpane*, in which Åkerfeldt shines as a soloist. The opening lines in F# are perfectly constructed to fit the song, almost as lyrical as the vocals themselves. In this, Åkerfeldt was inspired by Andy Latimer, guitarist for English progressive rock pioneers Camel. Latimer's forte was to tell stories through moody and modal leads, targeting specific notes to create and release tension. "It's a sound that I almost tried to copy," Åkerfeldt once told TG. "I wanted to sound as close to him as I could."

16

BAT COUNTRY
AVENGED SEVENFOLD

(2005)

The Californian quintet's third album *City Of Evil* heralded a time of great musical exploration which saw them moving away from the heavier metalcore sounds of earlier years. One thing that hadn't changed, however, was the face-melting guitar acrobatics from lead axeman Synyster Gates, who by this point in the band's career had already established himself as arguably the most accomplished shredder in the New Wave Of American Heavy Metal. The solo in *Bat Country* begins with stinging unison bends on the higher strings in the key of D minor and a quick burst in the first position of the minor pentatonic scale at the 10th fret. The unison bends repeat once more, this time with a divebomb in the gap where the rest of the musicians cut out, before Gates begins his onslaught of extreme bends and introduces more chromatic ideas as the lead sections builds and builds in tension. Instead of simply concluding the solo there, rhythm player Zacky Vengeance then joins him for a classical-inspired harmonised section in D minor, with the guitar duo turning their Schecters into a baroque duet that seemingly comes out of nowhere. The element of surprise is key here.

15

DAMAGE CONTROL
JOHN PETRUCCI

(2005)

Featured on *Suspended Animation*, the Dream Theater maestro's solo debut, *Damage Control* has a white-knuckle ride of a guitar solo begins in familiar enough territory: with a bluesy pentatonic-based lick, anchored around the 5th fret. But, as is the joy with many a Petrucci solo, it then unfolds across the entire length and breadth of the fretboard with a full minute of whiplashing plot twists and rapidly shifting techniques. From expressive bends to warp-speed shred patterns, it's such a riotously fun listen because it sounds like Trooch himself is having the time of his life joyriding around the neck of one of his humbucker-equipped Music Man signatures. The rest of his scorching lead tone comes from an overdriven Mesa/Boogie with added distortion and a little delay for good measure. With his faultless coordination and levels of speed and stamina that mere mortals can only dream of, it's easy to think of Trooch as some kind of guitar deity. But even he has a few tricks up his sleeve to make playing solos as challenging as this one a little more manageable, and he'll typically hoist his guitar up over his left knee for extra purchase when tearing it up live.

14

TELL ME HOW IT FEELS
CARDINAL BLACK
(2022)

An unusual guitar, and a solo that sings...

For years, Chris Buck has captivated a hefty online audience with his stellar Friday Fretworks YouTube series. But for the Welsh six-string phenom, things really skyrocketed when he brought his buttery rich tones and vocal-inspired phrasing to his new band Cardinal Black's neo-soul debut *January Came Close*, featuring standout track *Tell Me How It Feels*.

"It was our first single, so it was our introduction to the world," Chris says. "We didn't really exist as a band as far as anyone knew. We'd certainly never gigged, so it was one of the rare occasions in my life of recording where I've had a totally blank canvas.

"The solo took shape relatively quickly. We were at Rockfield in South Wales recording bass and drums for an EP. As you inevitably do, we had a couple of hours left at the end of the last day, so we thought we might as well have a stab at some of the guitar stuff! Everything was set up and ready to go, but I knew I had a relatively finite amount of time to actually record this solo. Generally speaking, that brings the best out of you because you don't overthink. If I'd gone into it having road tested it for two years, it probably wouldn't have emerged quite so spontaneously.

"A lot of the guitar players that I've grown up aspiring to play like – whether it's Slash, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton or Derek Trucks – they're guys where the solos are great, but they're very much within the context of a song, and they're there to serve its development. That's always been at the forefront of my thinking when it comes to constructing solos.

"My mother was big into pop music, soul and Motown, so I grew up with a lot of Otis Redding and Sam Cooke. Outside of that, there'd be Ella Fitzgerald and my grandfather was turning me onto Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and the crooners, so great vocalists have always been a big part of my inspiration. Vocalists don't think in terms of modes or boxes or pentatonic shapes. It doesn't work like that. Vocalists think linearly and that's what I was trying to copy in some shape or form.

"I used my Goldtop Revstar. I really love that guitar. I remember seeing them after they were released in a guitar shop in Cardiff and liking the fact that it was a relatively simply appointed guitar. I thought it was unusual for a guitar to be released that wasn't derived from a Les Paul, Strat or Tele. That instantly connected with me, and there's something to be said for developing a sound and there being a rather unusual guitar at the front and centre of it.

"The Victory V140 was the amplifier, running into a Zilla 1x12 speaker cabinet. The only two effects pedals we used were the ThorpyFX Gunshot as an overdrive, and then the Mythos Golden Fleece as a fuzz. The delay was added with plugins."

13

CHINA TOWN
VAN HALEN

(2012)

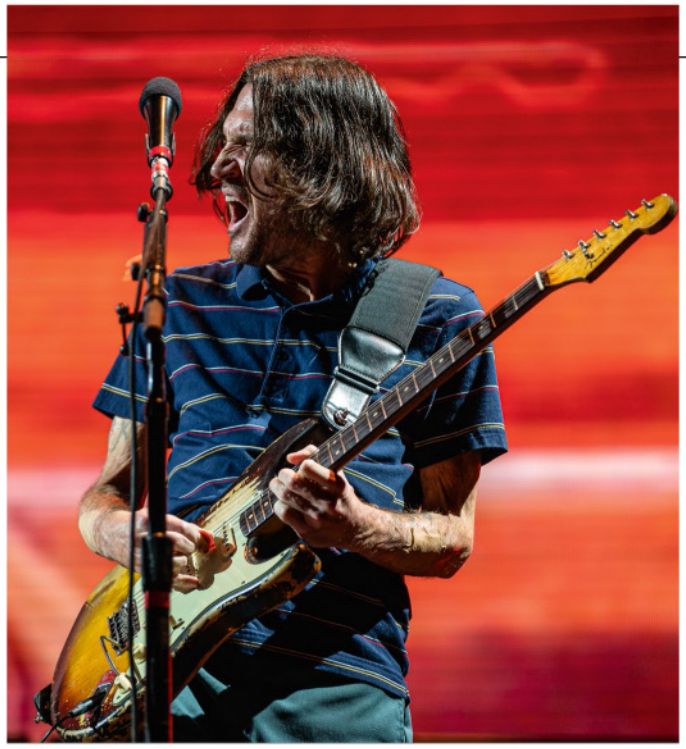
Van Halen only released one full studio album in the 21st century, but that was all Eddie needed to show he was still a force. The furious tempo in *China Town* brings to mind VH classics *Hot For Teacher* and *I'm The One*, although without their signature swing. The solo's opening horse impersonation, followed by signature three-note-per-string sequences, leave no one in any doubt about who is playing. The licks that follow are all from the playbook of the first six VH albums, but delivered with such fire that no one could object. There's a dissonant sequence that sounds like a nightmare version of *Panama*. Eddie's newly-developed 5150 III amps gave him more gain than he'd ever had, but the tone is instantly identifiable as the guy who played *Eruption*. Indeed, for the second half of the solo he kicks into a phrase reminiscent of the picked phrases from that legendary solo, showing it was every inch as powerful when placed inside a song. Just as you think Eddie has no new ideas, though, the solo climaxes with tapped, chromatically descending trills played in octave unison with the bass – a feat made possible by Wolfgang Van Halen, who also masterminded the album.

12

ATOMIC MIND
NICK JOHNSTON

(2014)

The title track from Nick Johnston's third album was the song that changed his life and introduced him to the wider world as one of the rising stars of instrumental guitar. Unlike a lot of virtuoso players, however, his dedication to melody and harmony over technique is what established the Schecter signature artist as one of the most tasteful players in the game. That's not to say he chose to sit back and embrace a more simplistic approach for the entirety of *Atomic Mind*. With the warp-speed legato runs introduced for the main solo section in B♭ minor three minutes in, there is a nod to the slippery brilliance of rock fusion masters like Guthrie Govan and Richie Kotzen. "I had been working on blending chromatics with some of my legato parts for a few years before this record was recorded," Nick says. "So you can hear some of the faster lines borrowing some of those ideas. I'm basically playing with a 6/8 feel over a couple of simple powerchords, which gave me so much freedom with how I wanted to approach the solo rhythmically. Everything was wide open, and the final take was something that had the right energy, intensity and feel I was after."



11

EDDIE

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

(2022)

Frusciante's heartfelt tribute to EVH

In the mid-90s, 80s rock was about as cool as illegally parking in a disabled bay. This was a matter of some consternation to Eddie Van Halen, who complained to *Guitar World* in 1996 that none of the new rockstars would acknowledge Van Halen's influence. Eddie would be highly vindicated to see the world of today, then: Pearl Jam's Mike McCready regularly covering *Eruption* in concert, Wolfgang performing Van Halen covers with Nirvana's drummer, and perhaps biggest of all, the Red Hot Chili Peppers releasing a song called *Eddie*.

John Frusciante has admitted he struggled to find the right balance between his own sound and Eddie's. "I was trying for a while, and I wasn't happy with anything I was doing," he told *Guitar Player* last year. "I was either going too far in the Eddie Van Halen direction, to where it was too busy and there was too much two-hand tapping and it didn't sound like me, or I was just doing it and it only sounded like me… in a song about Eddie Van Halen." Finding this balance wasn't helped by the difficulty of inviting comparisons to hard rock's greatest ever soloist. John told TG: "You're basically saying to people, 'Think about Eddie Van Halen.' And then when it comes to this long guitar solo at the end, you're going, 'Now watch this!' And I did not like that idea."

Frusciante considered dropping the solo altogether, but the balance he found is perfect. He admitted his favourite parts of Eddie's style weren't always the fast licks, but "playing in a way that feels spontaneous, or when you hear feedback because he recorded his parts in the same room as his amplifier. To this day, those things give me chills." For the first solo in *Eddie*, John recorded next to his amp, his Strat humming with feedback the whole way. He taps briefly before moving into a pitch-wheel effect similar to Eddie's lick on *Beat It*. By using his favourite Strat, though, the vibe remains undeniably Frusciante. One moment there's an Eddie-esque pinched harmonic, and the next the feedback shrieks out of control in a distinctly RHCP way.

The outro solo sees Frusciante attacking his whammy bar with abandon, along with more sustaining, harmonic feedback. He wisely keeps his use of tapping limited, creating melodic phrases with bends and taps as Eddie did on *Panama*. As Eddie did on the early VH albums, John delivered the entire solo in one take: "I stopped being self-conscious about the idea that the song was about Eddie and just did what was natural. We were recording, and I took maybe a 15-minute break. And when I came back in, I just did the whole thing."

The solo is filled with blazing pentatonic licks, but they're clearly Frusciante's pentatonic licks. Wisely steering clear of aping Eddie's ideas, John instead captures the spirit of Van Halen: wild abandon, a dangerously cranked amp, and a deep love of guitar.

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE!

Revealed! The top 50 guitar solos of the 21st Century as voted by TG readers

50 *I'll Tell You Someday* – Plini
49 *Interstate 80* – Tom Morello ft. Slash

48 ***Winner Takes All* – Nita Strauss**
With a solo that goes from the bluesy bends Slash made famous to the Satch-esque liquid legato, this is undoubtedly one of Nita's finest moments.

47 *Grinder* – Gary Clark Jr.
46 *Time Warp* – Brad Paisley
45 *Aesthetics Of Hate* – Machine Head
44 *Valley Of Fire* – Jason Becker
43 *The Hunter* – Mastodon
42 *Get Out Of My Yard* – Paul Gilbert
41 *In Too Deep* – Sum 41
40 *I Want My Crown* – Eric Gales ft. Joe Bonamassa
39 *Razor's Edge* – Dream Theater
38 *Mr. Ed* – Mammoth WVH
37 *Make It Wit Chu* – Queens Of The Stone Age
36 *Invisible Monster* – Dream Theater
35 *I Let My Guitar Do The Talking* – Buddy Guy
34 *Little Pretty* – Steve Vai
33 *Last Nite* – The Strokes
32 *A Gunshot To The Head Of Trepidation* – Trivium
31 *Darkest Hour* – Zakk Wylde
30 *Ghosts* – Big Wreck
29 *Lazaretto* – Jack White
28 *Damage Control* – John Petrucci
27 *In Repair* – John Mayer
26 *Windowpane* – Opeth
25 *Sick Sad Little World* – Incubus
24 *Holiday* – Green Day
23 *Hey Hey Rise Up* – Pink Floyd

22 **Atlas, Rise! – Metallica**
If Metallica's tenth album was the sound of them finding their feet again, it was partly due to the creative surprises – like this Kirk Hammett solo which skips around through various keys.

21 *Super Colossal* – Joe Satriani
20 *Eddie* – Red Hot Chili Peppers
19 *Drive Home* – Steven Wilson ft. Guthrie Govan
18 *Ball And Biscuit* – The White Stripes
17 *Waves* – Guthrie Govan
16 *Psychosocial* – Slipknot
15 *Ego Death* – Polyphia ft. Steve Vai
14 *Playing God* – Polyphia
13 *China Town* – Van Halen
12 *Bat Country* – Avenged Sevenfold
11 *Sloe Gin* – Joe Bonamassa
10 *Hammerhead* – Jeff Beck
09 *Slither* – Velvet Revolver
08 *Midnight In Harlem* – Tedeschi Trucks Band
07 *Like A Stone* – Audioslave

06 **There Was A Time – Guns N' Roses**
After some stunning leads from Richard Fortus earlier on, it's Buckethead who heads up a wah-drenched assault for the song's climatic ending in B Dorian.

05 *Reapers* – Muse
04 *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* – The Darkness
03 *Rise* – Extreme
02 *Blackbird* – Alter Bridge

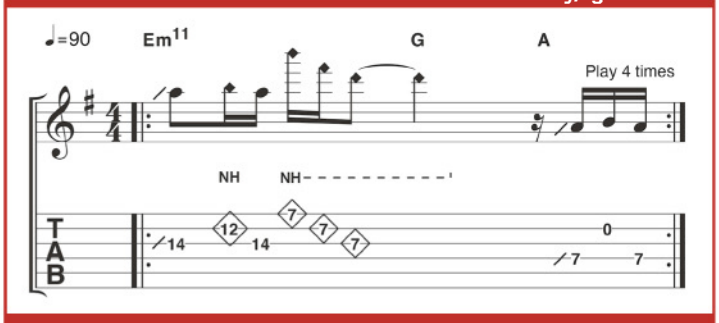
01 **The Weight Of Dreams – Greta Van Fleet**
This closing track from the US rock quartet's second album unequivocally stands as Jake Kiszka's biggest guitar moment to date. Over the course of its four-minute long outro in Am, there's no shortage of charisma and feel.

10

PLAYING GOD
POLYPHIA
(2022)

Of late, few names have impressed the guitar community as much as Polyphia duo Tim Henson and Scott LePage, and *Playing God* is one of their most daring innovations, as they ditched their usual Ibanez AZ electrics for a new nylon string signature – the TOD10N electro-acoustic. The opening solo uses ideas from the E harmonic minor and diminished scales, all linked together by many a passing tone in order to emphasise the track's jazzy, Al Di Meola-esque feel. For the closing leads, Henson and LePage run through some octave-based lines that, thanks to a healthy dose of delay, almost feel like wide-interval synthesizer arpeggios. Henson noted how it forced him to brush up on every technique from hybrid and selective picking to hammer-ons. It's not for the faint-hearted.

PLAYING GOD: NATURAL HARMONICS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



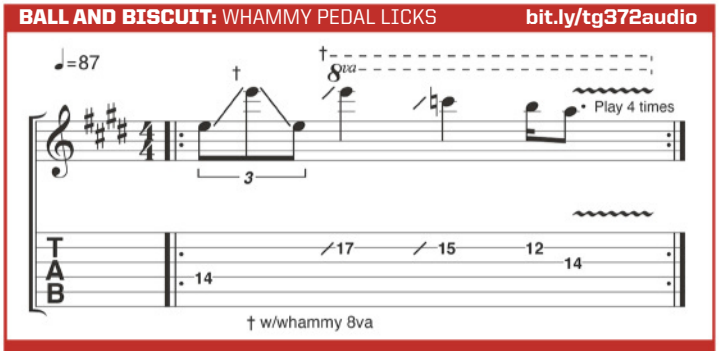
Our *Playing God*-inspired example uses natural harmonics in conjunction with fretted notes and open strings. The natural harmonics are played by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated in the tab. The finger slides into the fretted notes are also an important feature.

09

BALL AND BISCUIT
THE WHITE STRIPES
(2003)

Jack White's genius is almost underwhelming when you analyse it: a Whammy pedal, a Big Muff, and the minor pentatonic scale. But to break it down to those components gives no sense of what a revelation he was to hear. There's a definite nod to Hendrix at the start – that opening lick is essentially *Voodoo Child* up an octave – but his startling timing and unexpected octave leaps quickly leave the realm of the familiar. From 2:03-2:05 he makes his guitar sound like it's been recorded backwards, and his trademark stuttering picking tells us we're not in the Mississippi Delta anymore. Then he jerks the Whammy pedal back to normal pitch, creating a divebomb just as surprising as when Hendrix first performed them. If it didn't end with a classic turnaround, we'd probably forget entirely that we were hearing 12-bar blues.

BALL AND BISCUIT: WHAMMY PEDAL LICKS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Here's a simple approach to Jack's Whammy pedal licks. We have the pedal set so the notes are normal pitch with the heel down and then one octave higher when the pedal is pushed forward. The E note is picked on the 14th fret and then the Whammy pedal is rocked forward and back in the indicated rhythm.

08

REAPERS

MUSE

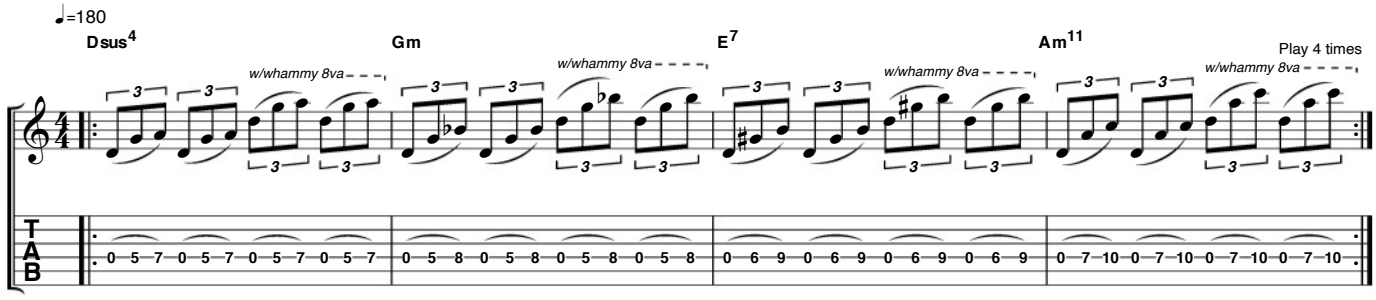
(2021)

Matt Bellamy's magnum opus

You could make a Top 20 list just of Matt Bellamy's 21st Century solos, but *Reapers* boasts an intro that outdoes most guitar solos for drama, sounding like a dystopian *Hot For Teacher*. After the first chorus, Matt introduces Eddie to Tom Morello, developing the intro lick with Whammy-pedal octave shifts. With a less inventive guitarist, you'd wonder if anything was left for the main solo; with Bellamy, you just hold your breath. He enters with a Kaoss Pad divebomb and dissonant Whammy pedal lines, and builds into the mother of all pickslides, enhanced with stereo panning. From there he dives into Whammy-powered trills straight from the Morello playbook, following that with a sequence of angular licks that show Jack White isn't the only one who can make blues sound quirky. He transposes a three-note repeating lick into unexpected places, creating melodic hooks out of thin air.

Even as stadium-conquering rock overlords, Muse have maintained a level of indie rock credibility, and as the solo drops down to just bass and drums, Bellamy shows those roots. In other hands, that might be a moment of epic vibrato and leather-trouser posturing, but Bellamy's tone and attack keep things more Nigel Godrich than Nigel Tufnel. From there, we're into the final section, which is also the easiest to play, because Bellamy knows melody trumps wizardry every time. Hitting top gear, he leaps up an octave and starts tremolo picking for the last few bars. *Reapers* has all the elements that make Matt Bellamy great.

REAPERS: WHAMMY'D LEGATO **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Our Reapers-esque example features a trademark use of legato on the fourth string. The open D acts as a drone note, giving continuity as the hammer-on notes change. We've written the implied chord names above the notation. A Whammy pedal is rocked forward to provide an octave up effect on beats three and four of each bar.

Photo Getty

07

BLACKBIRD
ALTER BRIDGE
(2007)

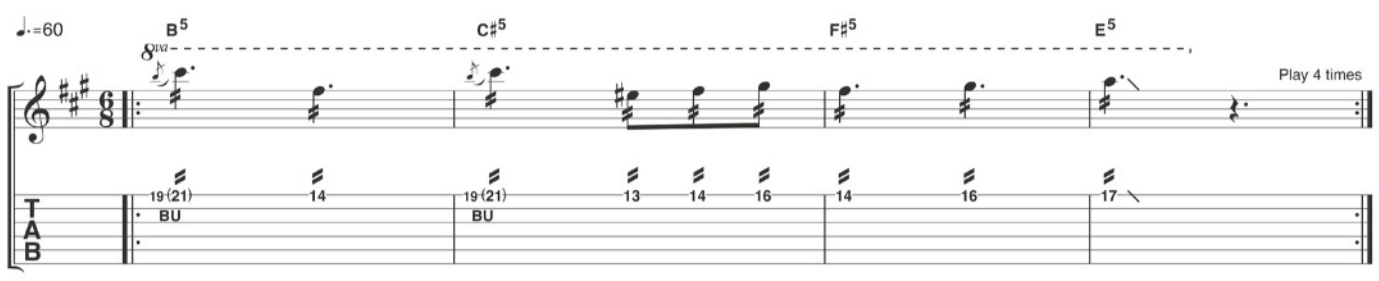
In a rock epic, Mark Tremonti flies high

The greatest tag-team solo since the glory days of Thin Lizzy saw Myles Kennedy and Mark Tremonti trading blows over a brooding groove in 6/8. Kennedy's Diezel Herbert tone contrasts with Tremonti's spitting Dual Rectifier, so there's no doubt who's playing what. Kennedy takes first blood with a Uni-Vibe drenched melody. With plenty of time to stretch out, Myles holds his opening notes for up to two bars each, luxuriating in the sustain from his PRS singlecut. On his second time round the chord progression, he builds a melody based on the underlying guitar part, including some colourful outside notes. He ends his solo rising to some screaming bends, ready for Tremonti's takeover.

Mark's opening punch sees the entire band rise dynamically. While he might have been tempted to go full shred, he wisely holds back with long, singing vibrato. There's a brief but gnarly legato run at 5:29, with Mark's signature Morley wah adding drama. Even then, he returns to melodic phrases that echo what the band are playing underneath, delivering epic, sustained notes as the music reaches its headiest point. The shred proper doesn't arrive until the last four seconds, a tremolo-picked finale that paves the way for Kennedy's soaring vocals to return.

For all that this was hailed as the return of the guitar hero at the time, the emphasis here from both players is on melody and dramatic vibrato – it's more Michael Schenker than Yngwie Malmsteen. Shred was back, but this time, it was tasteful.

BLACK BIRD: TREMOLO PICKING **bit.ly/tg372audio**



The solo in *Blackbird* features a smorgasboard of techniques and the standout element is fast tremolo picking. To keep things simple, our example has all the notes placed on the first string. This will allow you to concentrate on developing the fast alternate picking motion without having to worry about moving strings.

06

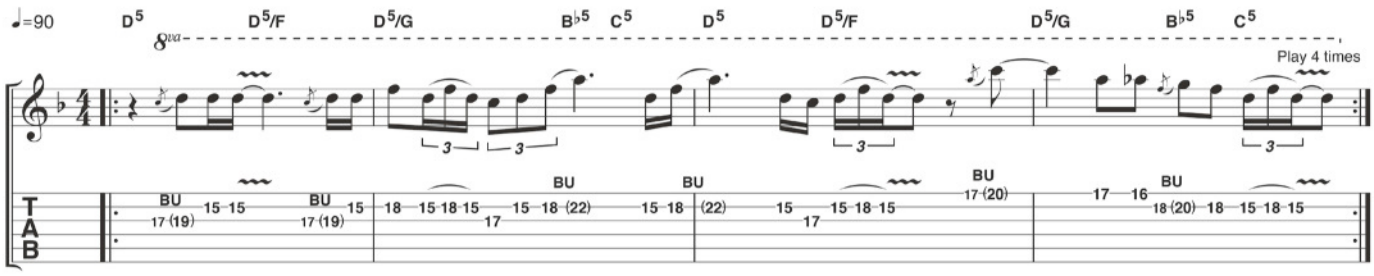
SLOE GIN
JOE BONAMASSA
(2007)

A masterclass in long-form soloing

If you've ever wanted to learn more about the art of long-form soloing, the last three minutes of this title track from Bonamassa's sixth album is as informative as it gets. *Sloe Gin* was written in the 70s by producer Bob Ezrin and composer Michael Kamen (both of whom worked with Pink Floyd), and it was Bonamassa's producer Kevin Shirley who suggested covering it. This would quickly become one of Joe's signature anthems and ultimately his most performed live track, partly thanks to its elongated solo section which provided the perfect bedrock for the guitarist to tell a story through the Les Paul in his hands.

Back in 2011, Joe told TG that he used an Iced Tea Sunburst '59 reissue Les Paul for the recordings, through "my Two-Rock Custom Signature Reverb, the Marshall Silver Jubilee and a small pedalboard with a DD-3 delay, a wah and maybe a TC chorus box". For the most part, the solo is played in various positions of the D minor pentatonic scale, with some extra colour from the added 2nds and 9ths thrown in here and there. The lines are more understated to begin with and slowly build in tension, with some aggressive bends and faster runs thrown in as the solo section progresses. Some descending diads thrown in right at the end help bring it all to a close, with a dramatic low E struck hard as his parting gift.

SLOE GIN: BIG BENDS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Sloe Gin's solo is a near three-minute blues masterclass from Joe Bonamassa, gradually building throughout and showcasing JB's exquisite touch and note choice. One aspect that stands out is the use of Gilmour-esque three- and four-fret string bends – and we've employed both here in our example. Be sure to warm up your hands first and also try few lighter bends to get a feel for whether you might potentially snap a string.

05

AFRIQUE VICTIME

MDOU MOCTAR

(2021)

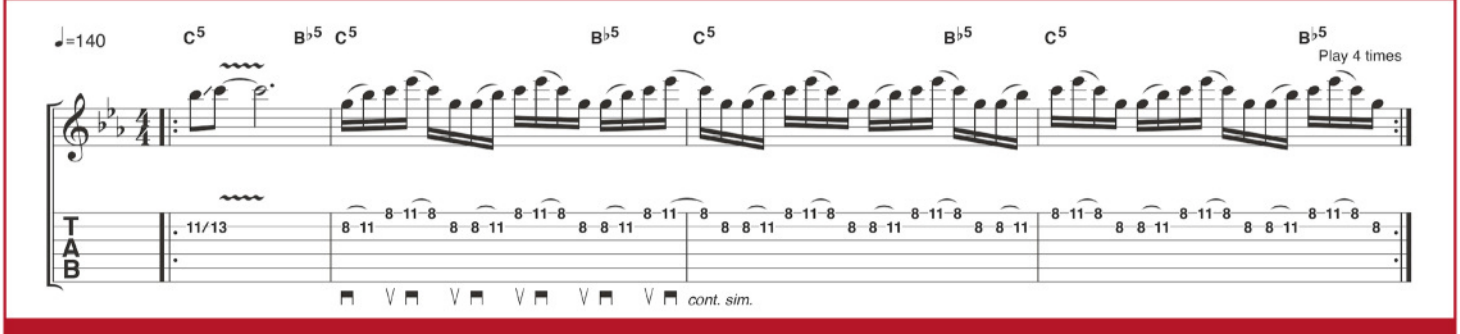
Desert blues with the spirit of Jimi

Although blues evolved in 19th Century America, its roots are in Africa. Enslaved people brought their musical traditions with them when they were transported to America. Musical traditions from across the continent combined and evolved into the blues. *Afrique Victime* sees the next stage of that evolution, as Niger's Mdou Moctar combines electric blues tones and phrasing with the rhythms and harmony of Tuareg berber music. The resulting 'desert blues' is psychedelic and mesmerising. The propulsive rhythms underneath clearly inspire Moctar's freewheeling improvisation.

It's not just the fusion of styles that are rarely heard together: Moctar's technique is original by itself. He doesn't use a plectrum, picking almost exclusively with his index finger. On his alternate-picked runs, he catches the string with his nail on the downstroke and flesh on the upstroke, creating contrasting tones. He also plays overhand surprisingly often, which is partly showboating but also creates wild bends and chaotic runs. He taps with his fretting hand while sliding down the neck, producing almost random sequences comparable to Joe Satriani's robot impressions.

Some of Moctar's sound is familiar – Hendrix is an obvious reference – but there's also the excitement of hearing something genuinely innovative. There's the tangible excitement of musicians who know they're breaking new ground, too. "I want to keep the sound as a very traditional sound. Because if you listen to my guitar, how I touch the guitar, it is so different," he told TG. "It is very traditional; it's not guitar! It is… Something!"

AFRIQUE VICTIME: REPEATING PENTATONIC LICKS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Moctar's epic three-minute solo features repeating pentatonic scale licks, played over and again, and often jumbled up with other related patterns. Our example homes in on a classic six-note repeating phrase played in the C minor pentatonic scale. The rhythmic subdivision here is 16th notes so the six-note pattern repeats on the offbeat every other time.

04

HAMMERHEAD

JEFF BECK

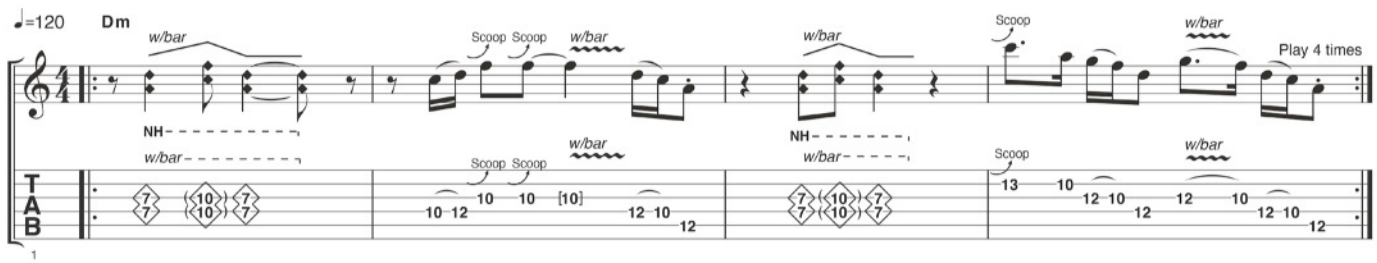
(2010)

A genius – improvising as only he could

From the latter part of Beck's trailblazing career, *Hammerhead* features one his greatest riffs and some of his most spectacular lead playing. The inspiration for the song came from Beck's frequent collaborator and keyboardist Jan Hammer, most notably his theme tune for hit television show *Miami Vice*. And after some scratchy Hendrix-inspired wah work, its main theme in D Mixolydian soon erupts with Beck sticking with minimalistic ideas during the verses using notes from the minor pentatonic and Dorian scales. The second verses brings with it added tension thanks to the major 7th played, belonging to the harmonic minor scale found in the same position.

The main solo begins just before the three-minute mark, Beck improvising in the effortlessly off-the-cuff style he was well known for – effectively talking through his instrument with no barriers in between and making it all up as he goes along – incorporating bluesy bends, whammy bar stunts and screaming higher notes over Tal Wilkenfeld's rock-solid bass grooves. Best of all, there's not a single idea that feels out of place or overly thought-out, proving that Beck was truly at home when improvising, saying what he needed to say in that particular moment in time. For the final section of the solo, he ventures high up the neck, using his Strat's whammy bar to throttle the sustaining notes ringing out before one big minor 7th to unison bend as the song's main theme reintroduces itself once again.

HAMMERHEAD: WHAMMY BAR WORK **bit.ly/tg372audio**



A master of Stratocaster manipulation, Beck found ways to employ every knob, button and bar to maximum effect – and the solo in *Hammerhead* features plenty of whammy bar work. Our example begins with whammy-manipulated natural harmonics that are bent up and down by a minor 3rd. This is followed up with gentle scoops into some of the notes that follow.

03

WAVES

GUTHRIE GOVAN

(2006)

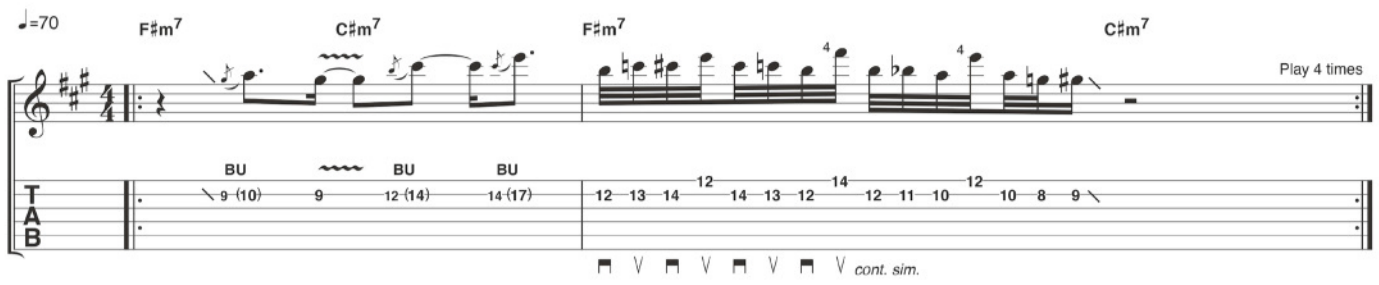
More notes than B.B. King played on entire albums

Before his debut album, *Erotic Cakes*, Govan was a guitar-playing Rory Bremner, capable of flawlessly impersonating any guitarist you could mention. It was a joy to discover he was also capable of sounding like no one else. On *Waves*, Guthrie delivers a turn of shred that justifies his *other* reputation as probably the most technically-complete electric guitarist on the planet.

For *Waves*, Guthrie was trying to make a fretted guitar sound fretless, hence the huge number of slides. The incredibly smooth neck pickup tone almost recalls a monophonic synth, but it's remarkable how relatively little gain he uses. The amp on this was almost certainly a Cornford MK50H II, which Guthrie endorsed at the time – a rock amp but not a high-gain one by modern standards. Most guitarists would cower in fear from attempting anything with that tone, let alone Guthrie's snaking, alien legato. Incredibly, it appears to be completely improvised: every live performance of *Waves* has featured a unique solo section. In 25 seconds, Guthrie delivers more notes than B.B. King played on entire albums, but it never seems like he's showing off so much as revelling in the joy of playing.

At 0:58 he screams out of an ascending run into a huge bend, and you barely catch a breath before he's off again, kicking up clouds of dust like a musical Road Runner. There are chromatic notes, fiery blues scale licks, and nods to Jeff Beck with the whammy bar, all announcing the end of Guthrie the sessioneer and the arrival of Guthrie the guitar hero.

WAVES: CHROMATIC NOTES **bit.ly/tg372audio**



The solo in *Waves* is a soaring, whistle-stop tour of advanced guitar techniques, including wide-interval bends, fast legato lines and, as we're analysing here, Guthrie's use of chromatic notes. Bar 2 is played with alternate picking and the key to increasing the speed is the use of the fourth finger of the fretting hand.

02

I WANT MY CROWN

ERIC GALES FT. JOE BONAMASSA

(2021)

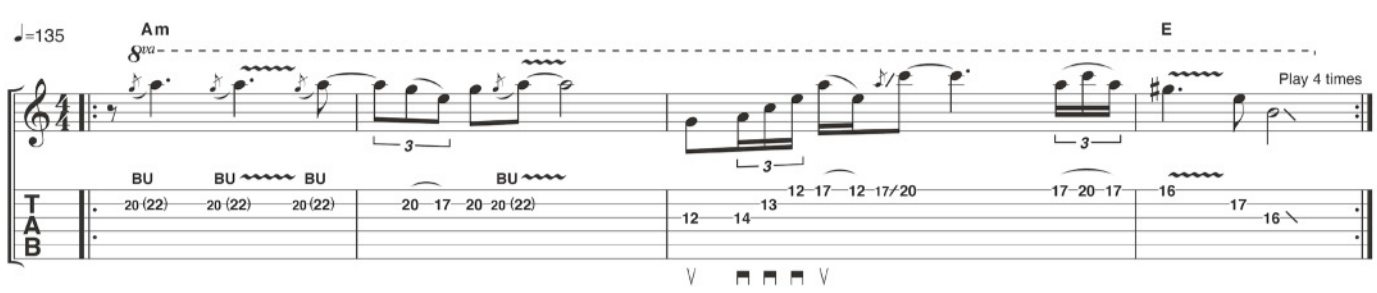
Two blues giants, one almighty pentatonic explosion

What happens when two of the greatest blues players on earth go head-to-head? A pentatonic explosion is the only correct answer. The fireworks heard on the lead single from Gales' *Crown* album, produced by Josh Smith and Joe Bonamassa himself, made it TG's Solo Of The Year in 2021. And in the time that's passed since then, our affections – and that of the wide blues community – have only grown warmer for this powerful conversation in A♭ minor between two highly gifted virtuoso players.

It starts very simply, with Bonamassa kicking things off with a minor 7th to root bend which naturally flows into some 1st-position pentatonics, but then he dazzles with a chromatic bebop line that snakes around higher up the neck. Gales then roars in with his Cry Baby shaping some jaw-dropping runs that splice Mixolydian ideas with some more Eastern-sounding flavours from the Phrygian Dominant mode.

With the ball back in his court, Bonamassa once again finds himself in 1st position, however this time he's an octave up and using some aggressive bends that build on the tension introduced by Gales, who then adds an octave layer to his next part of the trade-off, building the musical dialogue further still. Never one to be upstaged, Bonamassa responds by throwing in one of his infamous two note per-string runs at supersonic speeds, which prompts Gales to up his game and together they lead the song to its final chorus. Modern blues has never sounded so electrifying.

I WANT MY CROWN: RAKED ARPEGGIOS **bit.ly/tg372audio**



For the solo in *I Want My Crown* we are treated to a sparring session between two blues-rock heavyweights. Among the soloing ideas on show here are fast pentatonic patterns, string-bending, finger slides and vibrato. One idea that sticks out, however, is the use of raked arpeggios. We have notated the picking directions for the ascending Am7 arpeggio in the tab.

01

RISE

EXTREME

(2023)

Nuno Bettencourt's mind-blowing lead break from March of this year takes the honours in TG's rundown of the century's finest solos. Here's what you can learn from *Rise*

Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths

So we arrive here at the number one spot in our list – and for our money, this really is where it's at right now! Nuno Bettencourt's solo on Extreme's comeback single *Rise* is a technical tour de force, 55 seconds of sublime shredding that have taken the guitar world by storm, and, let's be honest, caused a fair few jaws to drop in sheer excitement. Over the page, Nuno discusses the solo, outlining the writing and recording process and revealing how he took inspiration from an unexpected studio visit from a revered guitar hero.

Here though, we take a close-up look at five key techniques you'll hear in *Rise*, simplified of course, so that us mere mortals can learn a few of Nuno's blazing solo ideas. If you can't manage to play our licks straight through, don't worry! Practise slowly and home in separately on the note choice and the techniques.

1 EXTREMELY FAST PICKING

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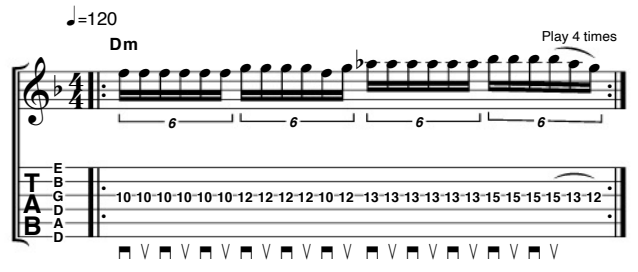
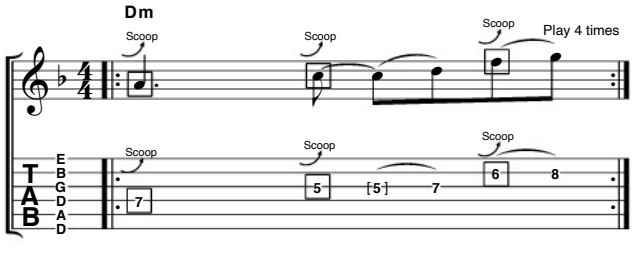


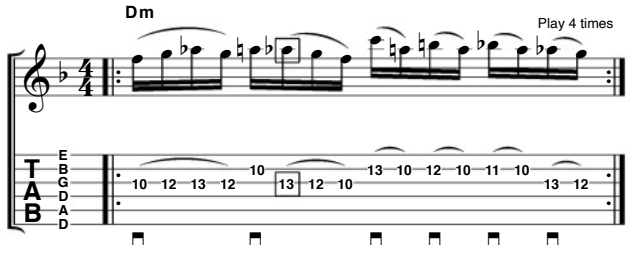
Nuno kicks off with rapid-fire alternate picking – his low-slung guitar no doubt helping him keep a loose, relaxed picking arm. It's the clarity that's most impressive here. It's often said that a firm pick is best for accuracy, but at this speed we'd fear snagging a string. A pick with a little flexibility may be friendlier!

2 FRET-HAND TAPPING AIDS WHAMMY SCOOPS



Next up, Nuno's fierce picking gives way to the more vocal qualities of clean, controlled whammy bar 'scoops'. He employs fret-hand tapping to sound certain notes, freeing up his pick hand to dip the bar. Use palm- and fret-hand muting to keep the idle strings silent and really make those scoops sing!

3 GET THE BLUES IN



Rise's solo is based in a D minor tonal centre, but Nuno has fun adding bluesy notes from outside the key for colour – and he has form with this. The solo in 1990's *Get The Funk Out* includes similar phrasing. Play our example using all four fretting fingers, combining downpicks with legato to ape Nuno's fluid style.

THREE SIDES... A TRIO OF TIPS TO GET YOU SHREDDING LIKE NUNO

1 USE FOUR FINGERS

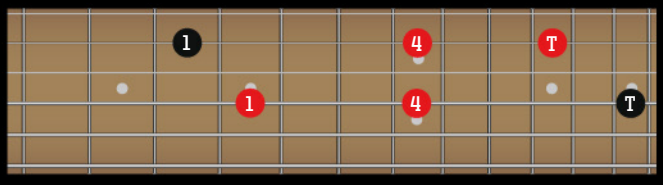
When it comes to his shreddiest licks, Nuno employs all four fretting fingers – including the dreaded pinkie! It's the only way to nail those wide-stretch licks.

2 PICKING: GET SMART WITH LEGATO AND MUTING

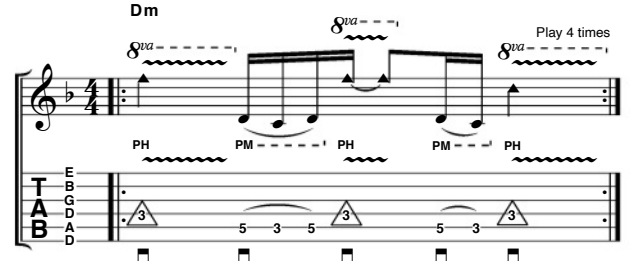
It often sounds like Nuno is picking every note when, in fact, most often he combines legato and picking. Palm-muting can mask legato and make notes sound more 'picked'. It's the secret to that wild riff at the start of *He-Man Woman Hater*.

3 SKIP A STRING

Whether you're using pentatonics or Van Halen-esque arpeggios you'll really hit the Nuno vibe if you skip a string. This puts bigger gaps between note groupings and breaks away from more traditional shapes played on consecutive adjacent strings. Try the tapped arpeggios shown here. The 'T's tell you which notes to tap.

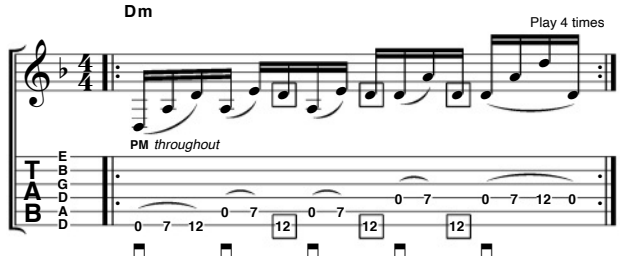


4 PINCHED HARMONICS FOR AWESOMENESS



Screaming pinched-harmonics sound amazing. Even more so when delivered in amongst the dry chunk of palm-muted low-string notes. Use the side of your thumb to dig (ie, pinch) in to the string as you pick with a downstroke, then add fret-hand vibrato to make your harmonic sing.

5 MORE THAN 3RDS



The finale features palm-muted hammer-ons with a series of wide-stretch shapes. We're homing in on one of these shapes where you'll need to execute a five-fret stretch from the 7th fret to the 12th – a 4th interval. Keep your pick-hand palm locked down on the strings at the bridge for a percussive attack.

Words Jenna Scaramanga **Photos** Jaime Ballesteros

"The first note I play, I miss the whole string completely!"

It's the guitar solo that everyone is talking about – but as **Nuno Bettencourt** now reveals, it starts with a mistake...

With his solo in the new Extreme song *Rise*, Nuno Bettencourt has animated the entire guitar community. "F*cking hell, that's a ridiculous solo!" gasped Justin Hawkins of The Darkness on his YouTube channel. Rick Beato's video breakdown of the solo rapidly garnered 1.5 million viewers. DragonForce's Herman Li and a host of YouTube faces produced reaction videos proving Beato's point that this is "the solo everyone is talking about".

As Nuno tells TG: "When *Rise* came out, we thought, 'OK, decent song, decent guitar solo', but the reaction that it got was something else. When Rick Beato posted his video breaking down the solo, and he's saying that Steve Lukather's calling, and his brother is calling and Phil X is calling saying, 'Have you heard the Nuno solo?', it was really surreal for me. It's that scenario that you fantasise about as a kid. He's saying things like, 'Other than Eddie, he's the guy!' You're like 'OK, hold on a second!' I had people I admire texting me, like Phil Collen from Def Leppard, Brian May reaching out and talking about it. You have to take a step back and go 'What's actually happening here?'"

Since the guitar Internet has blown up with people talking about it, Nuno has been trying to rationalise the response. He has some bold ideas about what it is – and isn't – about. "Mateus Asato hit me up like, 'What the f*ck did you just do?' and I'm thinking 'What do you mean what did I just do? You do this in your f*cking sleep!'" he laughs. "I realised that it's not about being able to do it. Anybody can play the solo. I'm not even joking. You break that thing down and there's not much going on technically, really."

If that's Nuno's idea of what anybody can play, we would suggest he holds off giving beginner guitar lessons for now, but his ideas about why *Rise* has struck such a chord are more convincing. "I believe the difference is that I never played the end of the *Rise* solo slow. I didn't calculate it. I had no clue what was happening because while I was recording it I decided that I want the rhythm section to guide me to whatever I'm about to do. I'll do a whole pass, and I might go, 'What did I just do?' I might break it down for myself and then do another pass, but it's got to be passionate and live at that time, even if you comp the solo from different takes. If you really want to break it down, I think it's the first note I play, I miss the whole string completely, I was so excited. It made a sound that I've never even heard before, like a kick drum mixed with a guitar note mixed with a car accident! My 18-year-old self would have fixed that, but now I was like, 'Oh my God I couldn't recreate that if I wanted to.' It went through me, and that's what I'm looking for."

"ANYBODY CAN PLAY THAT SOLO. I'M NOT EVEN JOKING"

As Nuno is quick to point out, it is not as though we are living through a drought of good guitar solos. "There's no lack of players in the world right now. As a matter of fact it's at a bar that's beyond belief. It's exhausting almost. Every day I wake up and scroll to Instagram. There are players that your jaw drops. You're like,

Washburn
N4

'I couldn't play that if I wanted to!' But what was missing was a band that puts out an album, and more importantly a video. Why a video? Because all these amazing guitar players are incredible technically, but most of them are sitting down. The rock 'n' roll culture, the passion, the fire, the danger and the joy – the physical part of it is missing. I think when somebody saw me actually *performing* a guitar solo, not just playing a solo, that's what inspires people. They want to do something that makes them go, 'F*ck this is exciting!' It's on a stage, going all-in. It's a physical-but-emotional way to play."

Even more important, he contends, is that unlike social media videos, this solo belongs in a song. "I had a little listening party with Steve Vai, Tom Morello and some of my peers. Of course when you put yourself in that position, those guys are gonna say, 'Yeah man, great album!' They're not going to tell you you suck, but what I was getting from everybody was it was a *rock* album. It's just a f*cking rock album in a time where my genre of albums don't come out that often. One of the things Rick Beato was most animated about was to see a solo in a song and in an arrangement. There's harmonies underneath. What the f*ck! What is this sorcery?"

Nuno says he didn't know the theory behind the chord progression until Beato explained it. "Those chords underneath the *Rise* solo – I did it as a vocal thing because I just heard it in my head. When Rick broke it down, I felt really smart. 'He's doing the bass over the perverted ninth' or whatever the f*ck it is. I thought for a minute, 'Oh my God, I know what I'm doing!' I probably wouldn't have done it if I'd known; it was 'wrong' in a way. But that's what's makes that second half of that thing flourish."

A couple of tasteful effects choices enhance the climax of the solo. Nuno is disappointed that no one has so far commented on the first. "Nobody's noticed it yet, but there's a higher octave on the second half of it. It was actually a plug-in because I couldn't find an octave-up pedal that I liked. The flurry at the end, it almost sounds like these harmonics are happening which I think is making people even think it's better than it is. It's just an octave up at like 20 or 30 per cent to make it grow."

The second effect was inspired by a surprise visitor to the studio. "I never record with anybody in the room," he says. "I need to black out when I play. I don't want somebody asking me if I want a f*cking cup of tea because then it wakes me up from where I am as a player and creatively. Gary [Cherone, Extreme singer] went to lunch and I go, 'Yeah, come back around one or two and I should be done with this solo.' During the recording my phone is blowing up, and it's p*ssing me off because Gary knows not to bother me while I'm recording. He keeps calling me, then he's texting me, 'Come downstairs, I'm in the front.' After the third time I'm like, 'I'm gonna punch this dude out! Something must be going on.' I go down, open the door and it's Edward Van Halen!"

Gary Cherone was Van Halen's singer in the mid-90s, featuring on the band's 1988 album *Van Halen III*. "Gary went to lunch with Edward, so I'm now talking with Edward in front of my house," Nuno continues. "He's like, 'You guys working on an album?' I said, 'Yeah, but I don't want you to come up and hear it yet. When it's done will you come back?' Stupid now in retrospect, not letting him come up and listen, but it wasn't meant to be. So maybe that's why afterwards when I was finishing that solo, I patched in the Phase 90 at the front. I've never used one my entire life until this album, because we all know the second you punch in a Phase 90 and you play the way I do, it's like 'OK, it's one thing to be influenced by Eddie, but now you're *being* Eddie.' From 1978 onward, from the day we heard *Eruption*, he owns the Phase 90. It's not MXR, it's an *Edward* Phase 90."

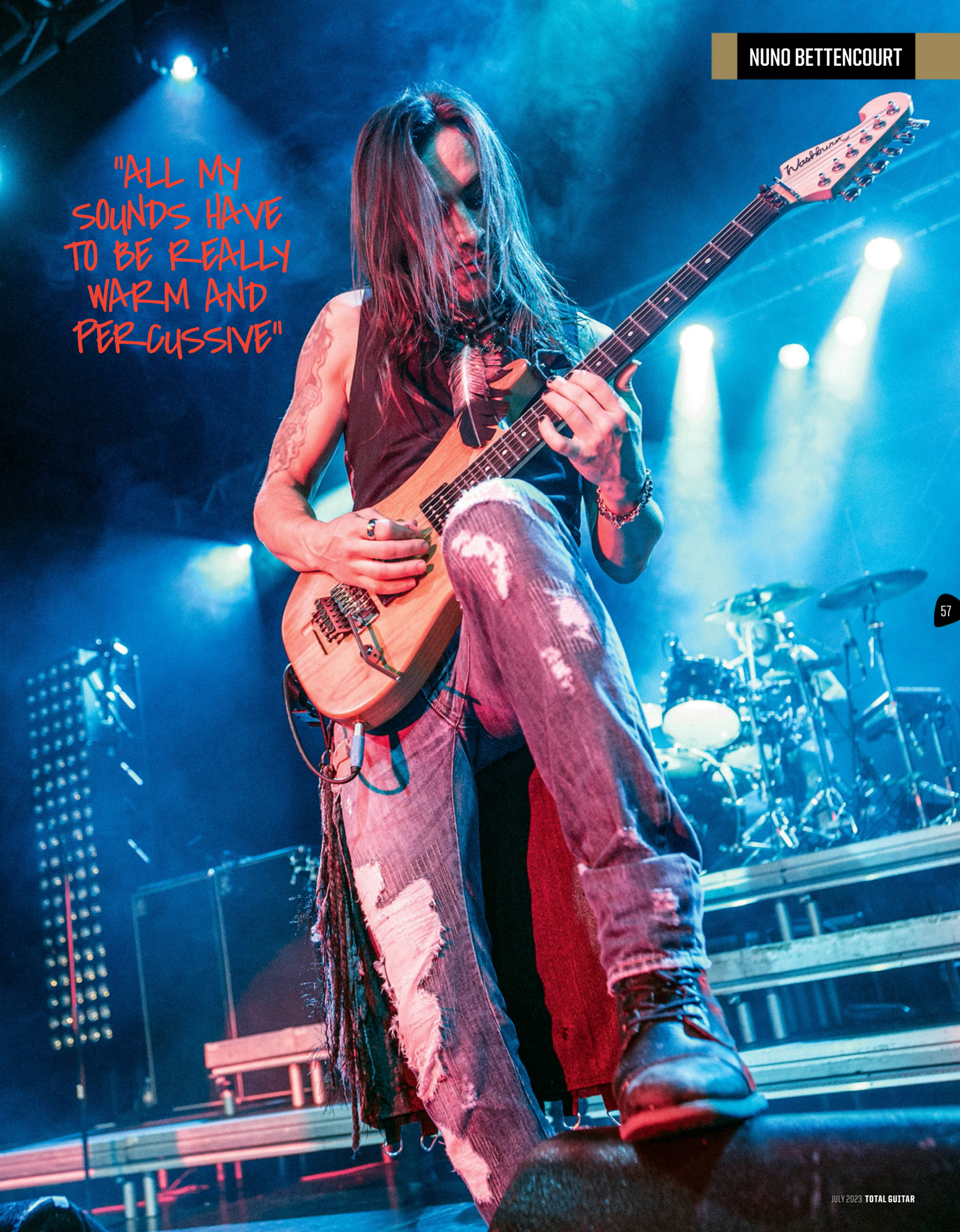
Nuno is at least as famous for his acoustic playing as for his shredding. There is an entire section of the public that only knows him for *More Than Words*. On Extreme's new album *Six*, that playing is exemplified on the ballad *Hurricane*. "It's about one of my best friends that I lost in a motorcycle accident about three or four years ago," he reveals. "I think I do one note on that solo. After the first bend it goes away for like four bars. It's one of my favourite parts of soloing on the album because the space is telling you the story about the pain that you're feeling, that you don't even want to play anything. I'm almost tearing up telling you about it

Nuno's Guitar Dictionary

simplexity

n. Technically advanced playing concealed by the no-nonsense spirit of rock.

"We all know rock and roll is simple, especially in my generation. It's a pentatonic world. That's why Edward Van Halen was so special, and that's why Jimmy Page was so special. We're not playing jazz, we're not John McLaughlin. How do we get creative with something so simple? Like with Yngwie Malmsteen, when I first heard Jim play with Alcatrazz, we go back and go 'Wait a second. I know this is just an E minor, but why is it so special? Why did it go through me and why did it make me want to go back and play it 20 times in a row?' The complexity of it is there, but it's hidden in the fire and the passion and the emotion. If you peel back the layers, there's a complexity. So it's *simplexity*. I think that's what rock 'n' roll is: a three-and-a-half-minute song with no science going on. We got to tell the story in two verses and touch somebody. You know how difficult that is? An eight-minute song, no problem, but you gotta touch somebody and write about something that's been written for the last 60, 70 years and still get them to cry, laugh, move them. And you wonder why we don't just spit out albums?"



"ALL MY SOUNDS HAVE TO BE REALLY WARM AND PERCUSSIVE"

EXTREME MEASURES
"If it turns me on, I play it," Nuno says. "If it's too heavy, f*ck you!"

right now, that's how much I was feeling. When I went to play it, I couldn't. I thought I can go back and fill those gaps in, or I can just leave what I felt at the time that meant something. Maybe somebody will feel that as well."

What may shock longtime Extreme fans is that for *Six*, they left the funk out. One song, *Thicker Than Blood*, has a syncopated chorus riffs that remind us of early Extreme, but as Nuno admits, "That's about it." That wasn't a calculated move, though. "We didn't even notice when we were choosing out of the 40, 50 songs we wrote how much funk there *wasn't*, but it really occurred to me as a producer. Actually I think that's good news. I think that's what it needed to be, when an album sews itself together on its own and says where we are at right now. I'm actually super excited about the next album because of it. I've gotten really inspired." He scrolls through his phone, showing TG dozens of voice notes. "They're all new song ideas. Ironically enough it's so funky! I don't know why – not even metal-funk, but *funk* funk, straight up. We even have a working album title that we're talking about. So the idea is that we don't go away for 13 years again. If we're excited, let's keep it going."

With the absence of funk and the presence of heavy drop D riffs, you might think this was Extreme's attempt at sounding modern, but Nuno insists that wasn't the plan. "The label were like, 'Great, we can cross over with this!' I didn't do it on purpose. I grew up on Metallica and bands of that generation that already did some of this sh*t. It's coming out now because it turns me on. Or maybe it's Disturbed I listened to, or maybe it's Five Finger Death Punch, subliminally. I'm not definitely not trying to be them because this is like babysitting compared to how heavy they are. We're so self-centred and in such a bubble that I don't care. If it turns me on, I play it. If it's too heavy, f*ck you! If it's too light, f*ck you. I really don't care what's happening out there right now, what's modern or what's old or what's new. I'll listen to stuff but I've never sat down and gone, 'Let's make a more modern-sounding album.'"

Certainly, Nuno's choices of gear were not more modern, being the same rig he's used on tour for the last decade. "I've always been very boring when it comes to this. There's no exciting Les Pauls or juicy stuff. It's just the Washburn N4, that block of wood with no finish that I've always played. I used my version of a Tele, the Nele that Washburn put out for me. I used it on a couple of songs. They're pretty obvious when they come up, like on *Small Town Beautiful*."

Nuno's amp is a Marshall DSL100. "A lot of people go, 'Really? We don't really like the way those sound.' The way I use it probably isn't what most people do. I have the amp pretty loud but I hate harsh sounds. All my sounds have to be really warm and a bit more percussive. When I hired a new tech he was like 'Somebody f*cked with your settings!' The presence, treble and midrange are at like one-and-a-half/two. The bass is like four or five, and it's just loud. When you turn it up it feels just right to me. You can make sh*t scream without people going 'We got to leave the building.' And you can play rhythm in a way that's really punchy and really warm."

The secret sauce is his ProCo Rat. "When I was on the Generation Axe tour with Zakk Wylde, Steve Vai, Yngwie Malmsteen and Tosin Abasi, they were like, 'What is the Rat pedal doing? You have the distortion almost all the way off.' I had every guitar player come up like, 'I don't get it, Bettencourt. It doesn't do anything.' I said 'Play the way I play for a second. Play muted, make it go like *gunk gunk gunk*.' It tightens up all the floppiness of any Marshall, any bottom end and just makes it feel like more of a kick drum. I cannot play without it. If you take that thing out of my rig, of course I'll play but it'll be a very unhappy show for me."

Nuno's Guitar Dictionary

murn

v. To play a solo that is both melodic and shredding at the same time.

"In the studio in the 80s when you're gonna go shred on the song, it was a 'burn' solo. Then on another song it's a 'melody' solo... So along with simplexity the word back then was 'murn'! If you can still make it fun and joyful and interesting for a guitar player but still keep the melody there, you've accomplished something. That's why I like my solo on *Other Side Of The Rainbow*, because it's got fire, but there's still something there to sing." Classic Nuno 'murn' solos include *Decadence Dance* and *Rest In Peace*, while on the new album *Mask* and *#Rebel* are standout murns. "The best instrumental albums always do the same thing," says Nuno. "Whether it was Beck, whether it was Satriani or even Steve Vai. You get a *Passion And Warfare*-type album, and the majority of the piece is melody driven."

"IT'S GOT TO BE PASSIONATE AND LIVE – EVEN IF YOU COMP THE SOLO FROM DIFFERENT TAKES"

The MXR Phase 90 makes another showing on album closer *Here's To The Losers*, a kind of anti-*We Are the Champions* anthem. "I was just like, 'f*ck, let's have Brian May and Edward come together and see what happens!'" he smiles.

The Brian May influence also comes out hard in the acoustic-driven mid-tempo number *Other Side Of The Rainbow*. "There's some phrasings right at the end of it that I should go to jail for even using. It's just Brian all day. Not on purpose, though – it's just in me now forever. It's a virus, the Brian May disease! I even sent it to him and said, 'I apologise for the solo. I know you're going to want it back. I'm just borrowing it for a minute!' It shows you that when I go to the melody side of things, that automatically comes out. Brian May is the most beautiful and most iconic string-bender of all time. When he bends a note it goes through you, and that's what I always picked up from him. I think that's my favourite solo on the album. It's easier when you're playing a crazy song and you're gonna go nuts. Maybe it's technically not easier, but it's to me it's a lot more difficult to hang with a melodic song and do something interesting."

Another lead guitar highlight is *Thicker Than Blood*, and Nuno is taken by surprise when we suggest it sounds like Prince. "Oh yeah, very *When Doves Cry*, even with the phrasing and stuff!" he grins. "Wow, I didn't even think of that and I'm a massive, massive Prince fan." It turns out both songs use the same octave pedal. "To me there's never been a better octave pedal than the Boss OC-2," Nuno asserts. "It just has a sound."

Overall, this album may not sound like Extreme's previous efforts but, as Nuno points out, that's always been true. "One song would be heavy and then it'd be like *More Than Words* and then it'd be a Frank Sinatra track. People were like, 'What is wrong with these guys? They can't decide who they want to be.' Somebody said to me Extreme fans aren't gonna like this. That this isn't Extreme. There was a part of me that went, 'Is that so?' Every album we've released, every song, I've heard, 'This is not Extreme! This doesn't work!' I said, 'You're basically telling me that it belongs on the album.' Every year the Extreme album ad should always be the same: expect the unexpected."

Extreme's Six is released on June 9.

"I always see the solo as its own song"

How to play better solos, by Nuno Bettencourt

1 LET THE SONG TELL YOU WHAT TO PLAY

My first piece of advice is that the song always wins. Always. If you abandon the song and you become a guitar player first, you've lost already. To me that's what was amazing about Edward Van Halen, and about Jimmy Page and all the greats: they still somehow stayed in the culture, the tonality and the melody of the song. The song is giving you three-and-a-half minutes of clues and inspiration. You have vocal melody, you've got lyrics, so you get what the song's about. There's a mood; there's a tone. If you go rogue, it's going to be just you on your own, and that's hard to carry. If you say 'A bunch of horses are going and I'm gonna ride with you,' then you have them all with you, riding a posse of melody and strength and power. *#Rebel* is a great example. The melody when I'm doing the fast descending tapping part is the same as the backing vocal melody of the previous bridge section. I ripped it off because it was there to be taken and to keep building off. The song just gave you a foundation. Don't go in on a mission to make yourself look good and sound good. Surrender to the song and it will do it for you.

2 THE SONG'S ARRANGEMENT CAN MAKE A SOLO BETTER

One of the main reasons the end of *Rise* works is because it went to half-time. It was a downshift. If I'd kept that going at full speed people would be like, 'Oh, it's just like a Racer X/Yngwie, whatever.' Those holes, that space to allow that thing to happen is everything. You have to play the culture of the song. It's like *Hurricane*, a song about my best friend that passed away. When somebody loses somebody, what are you gonna do – come in and f*cking rip through it? No, you're gonna hit that one note like I did.

3 ONLY SOLO WHEN YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

I always see the solo as its own song... and I always make it long enough to make sure it's a song! The band's like, 'Come on, dude, can't you do a 20-second solo?' I'm like, 'All right, I'll try that... nope!' I can't do it. Well, I do it in a couple of songs. In *Here's To The Losers* I'm actually just answering the vocal. It's how much the guitar player has to say. Don't do length because you want to play more. I only give myself the usual eight or 16 bars around, but then I feel like I might have more to say. If I can be creative within that I'll leave it. There were two or three songs on this album that I actually cut back the solos, because it's not saying anything anymore. If it's not turning me on in the room, it's not going to turn you on when you're listening to it."

REAL PLUGIN

LA-STUDIO

REAL TUBE HEAD | Two notes AUDIO ENGINEERING | SUPERGROUP DESIGN

Laney | Black Country Customs™ HANDCRAFTED IN THE UK | Two notes AUDIO ENGINEERING

SOLO MISSIONS

15 ways to play in the styles of today's masters of the guitar solo

Guitars and backing Jon Bishop

Welcome to the mega TG lead soloing feature. Over the following fifteen examples we are taking a whistle-stop tour through contrasting mix of musical genres of the 21st Century, with the aim of identifying just what has made these styles and their solos so great. Work through our tab examples and you too will soon be soloing with confidence in a variety of musical settings. We've ordered our examples roughly starting with the easiest to play, so why not challenge yourself to work through them all and see how far you can get?

To keep you on your toes we have used a variety of keys and time signatures, keeping our examples stylistically relevant to the tracks, bands and genres we've referenced for inspiration. For example, you can expect math-rock to use plenty of odd time signatures, so we have experimented with the unusual feel of 5/8 time.

There's a backing track for each example and each tabbed part is played four times to give you a chance to settle in and get the feel when practising. For the more technically challenging examples you may need to start slowly before playing with the track. Of course, our tab lessons are intended as springboards for your own ideas, so if you find a technique or motif that you like here, try using it in your own solos.

1 GARAGE ROCK

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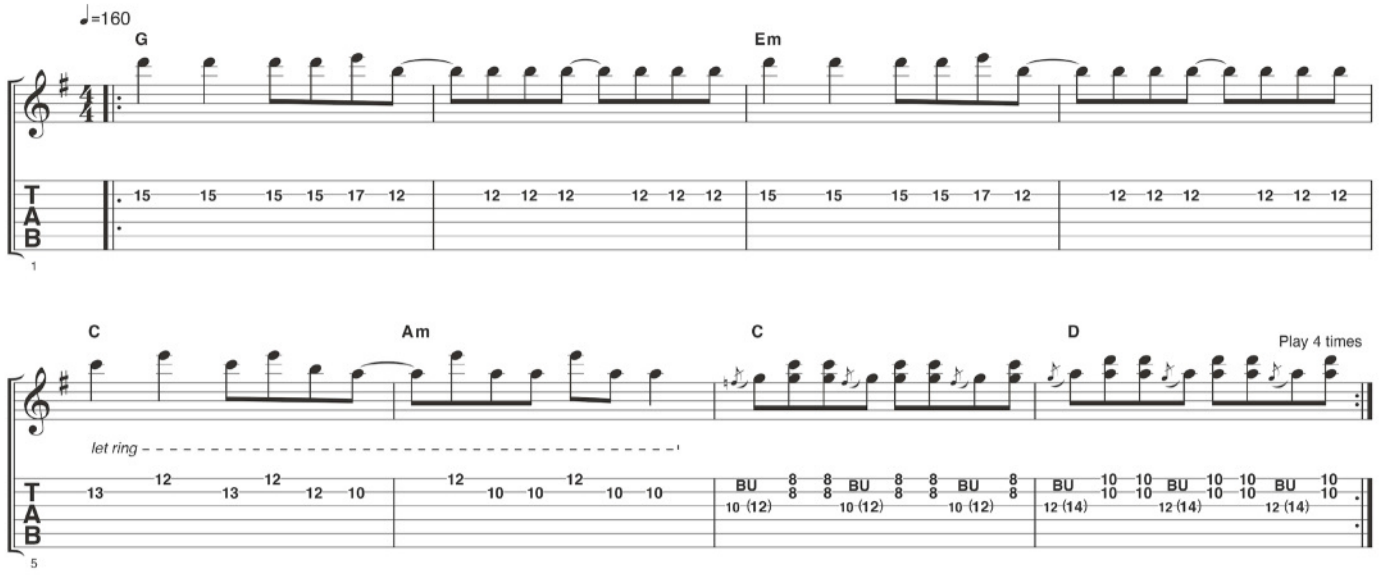

Our first example is inspired by Garage Rock acts of the early noughties, such as The Strokes. A simple catchy melody is played on the second string. When this hook line is repeated the chord changes, giving it a new lease of life. Our solo is finished off with some exciting sounding rock 'n' roll style doublestops. Bending the third string and playing a doublestop on the second and first strings is an idea that can be traced back to the early rock 'n' roll guitar pioneers. The techniques we used for this example can be heard in the solos for songs like *Last Nite* and *Barely Legal*.

2 INDIE ROCK

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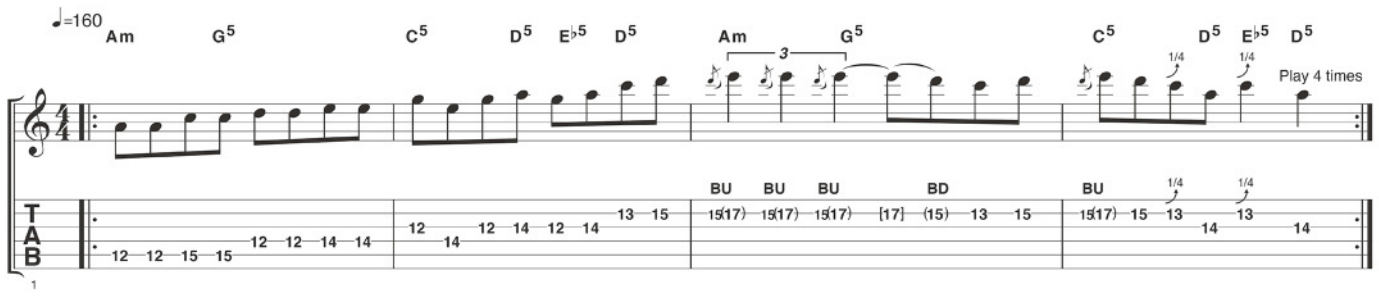

Our next example is inspired by indie rock bands like Arctic Monkeys. The minor pentatonic scale can be heard in the solos for songs like *Teddy Picker* and *I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor*. To maintain an even feel, try alternate picking the ascending A minor pentatonic line. Any C notes can be bent slightly sharp by a quarter-tone and this provides a bit of a blues-rock flavour.

3 PROGRESSIVE BLUES-ROCK

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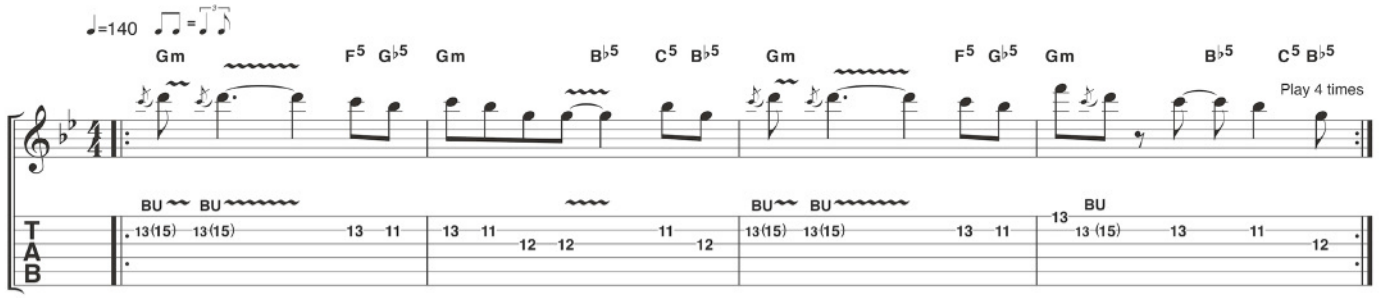

We're referencing Jack White's recent solo material here, with tracks like *Fear Of The Dawn* and *What's The Tricks* acting as our inspiration. A raspy fuzz tone is essential here. The phrasing is inspired by classic blues-style 'question and answer' ideas. The main technique to concentrate on is the string bending intonation. When practising the string bends first fret the D note (15th fret, second string) for reference and then try bending in tune from the 13th fret up to the D note.

4 UPTEMPO BLUES

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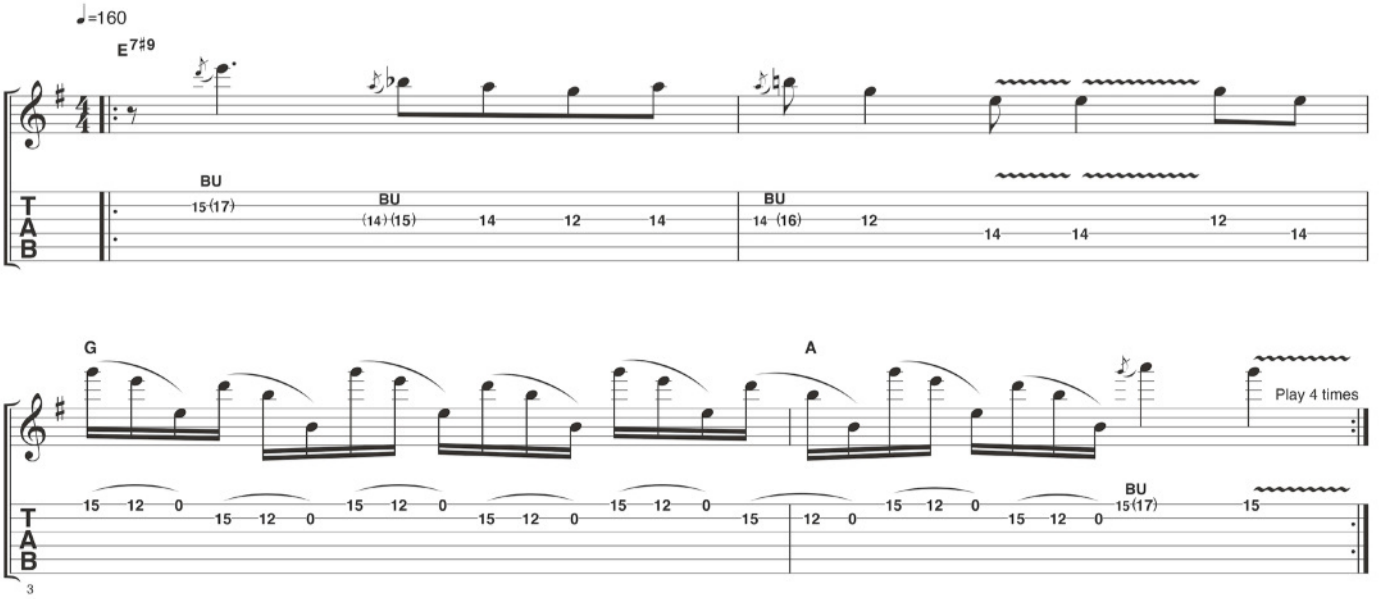

Our next example is inspired by modern day blues heroes like Eric Gales. Eric is not shy of undertaking the odd Jimi Hendrix style wig-out, so this one is in the style of tracks like *Rattlin' Change*. We're using the E minor pentatonic scale at the 12th position, and any of the open strings can be included. The main idea here is to pull off from the 15th fret to the 12th and then onto the open string in one motion. This creates a run of three notes that can be repeated as many times as required. In the key of E minor, this type of idea can be played on any string as long as the pentatonic scale shape is adhered to.

5 PSYCH-ROCK

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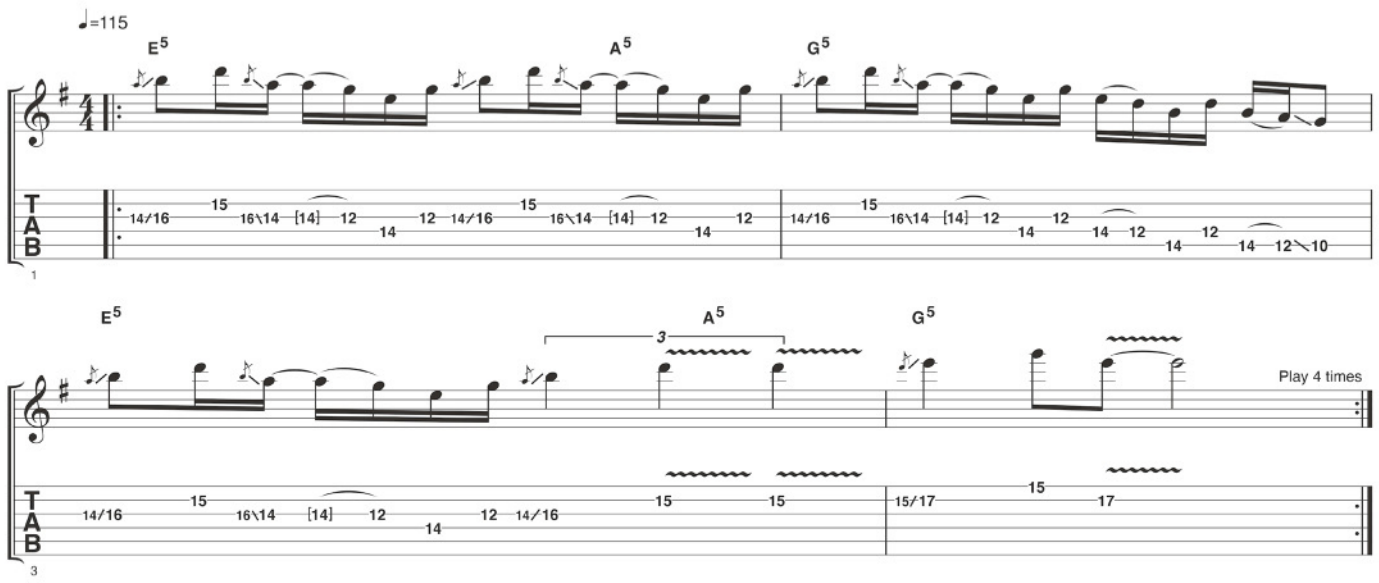

Today's psych-rock boom is spearheaded by acts like King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard and Mdou Moctar. Typically, there is often plenty of room for long passages of guitar soloing. Repetition is key here, providing a hypnotic effect when done well. To provide that psychedelic swirl in our track we used a chorus effect with the rate on fast. You can also experiment with effects like a phaser.

6 ROOTS ROCK

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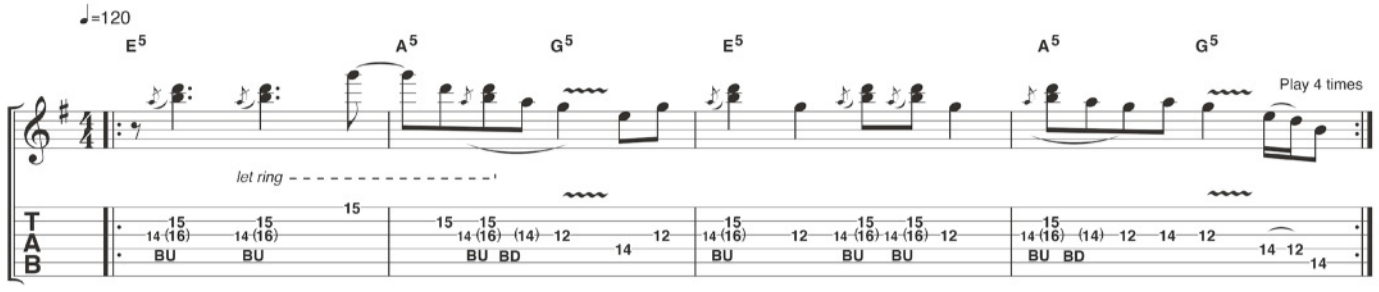

Blending elements of classic rock guitar and country guitar, Southern rock remains a traditional, rootsy style, with acts like Larkin Poe and Samantha Fish adding a modern slant. For our example we are using some classic country-style doublestop bends. These bends can be supercharged by adding a bit of overdrive.

7 NEO-SOUL

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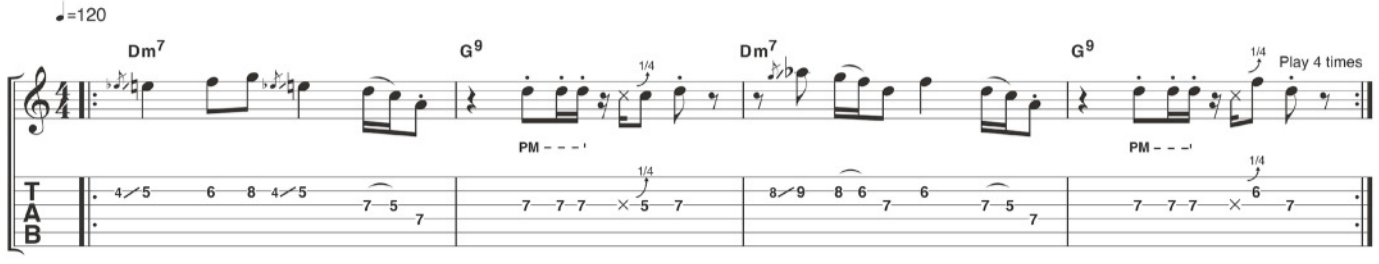

Here we're taking inspiration from neo-soul maestro Tom Misch's *Disco Yes*. The finger slide can be used to emulate the way a jazz saxophonist swoops into notes. To get this effect, simply slide into any note from a semitone below. Palm-mutes provide a more percussive attack to popping lines. To get the all-important tone, try selecting the neck pickup on your guitar and also roll the tone control off a bit.

8 HARD ROCK / METAL

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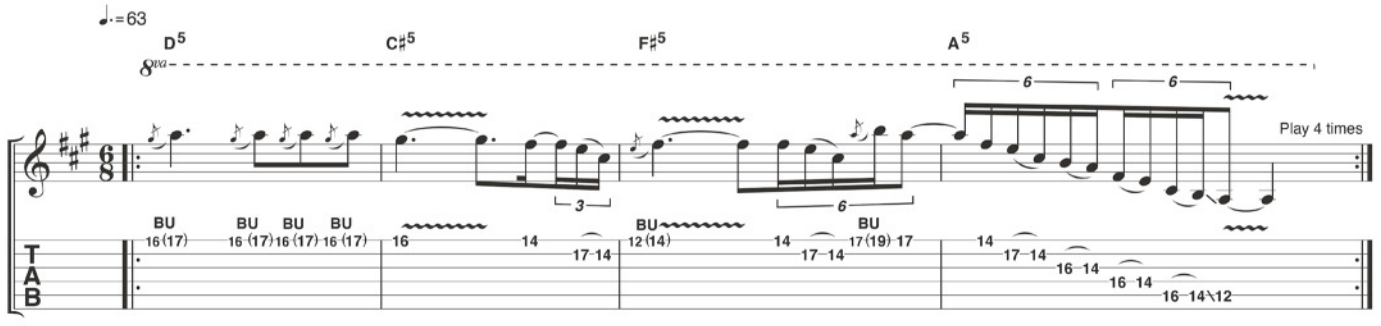

Often the heavier guitar styles are synonymous with guitar soloing, and here we look to bands Alter Bridge and Avenged Sevenfold for inspiration. Here, a wah-wah helps bring our lick to life, and the fast, descending run provides a nice challenge. We have used a churning 6/8 feel here so the count in is six clicks followed by a one-bar fill.

9 STONER ROCK & METAL

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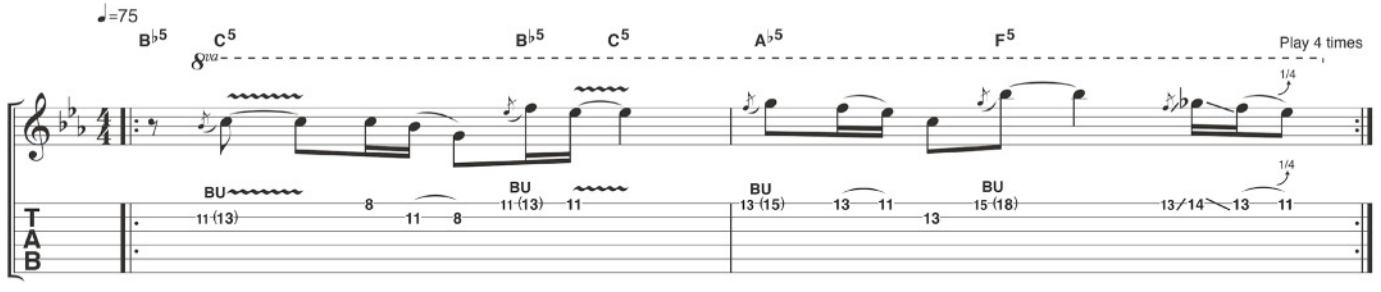

Blues influences and, indeed, the blues scale are commonplace in stoner rock and metal, for example in Mastodon's *Teardrinker* – and we're in C blues here in our example. The big bends can be tricky to execute, so if you are new to three-fret bends be sure to warm up first, and take care not to snap a string!

10 REVIVALIST BLUES-ROCK

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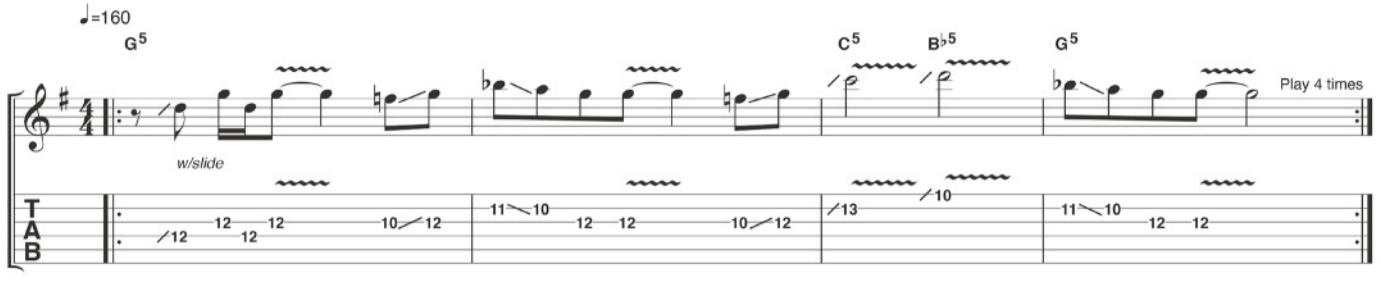

Inspired by Rival Sons' *Do Your Worst*, we're breaking out the bottleneck slide here. If you're new to slide playing, make sure your slide is directly over the indicated fret – not behind it. The other aspect of clean slide work is muting unwanted string noise. The fingers of both hands can rest on the strings as you play.

11 PROG METAL

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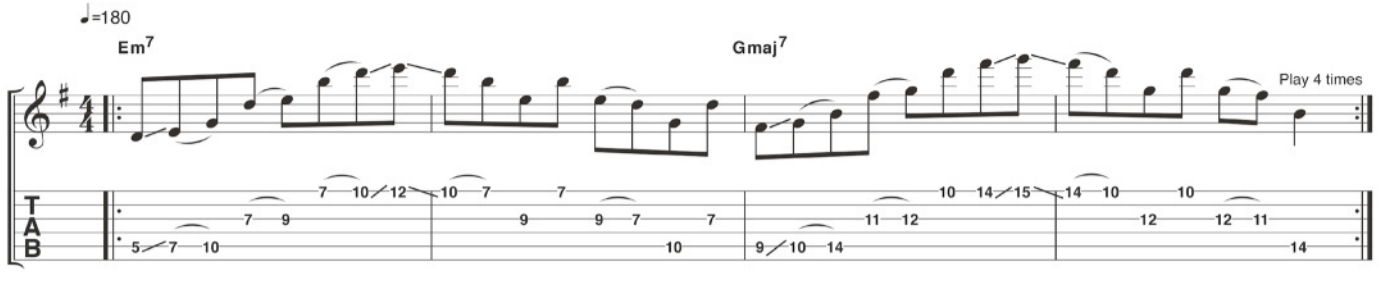

The string-skipping technique can be used to provide ear-grabbing leaps in pitch. Here in our prog-metal style lick, inspired by Periphery's *Scarlet*, we've linked the Em7 arpeggio to a Gmaj. Pointing the headstock towards the ceiling at 45 degrees can help with the ease of fingering.

12 UPTEMPO COUNTRY

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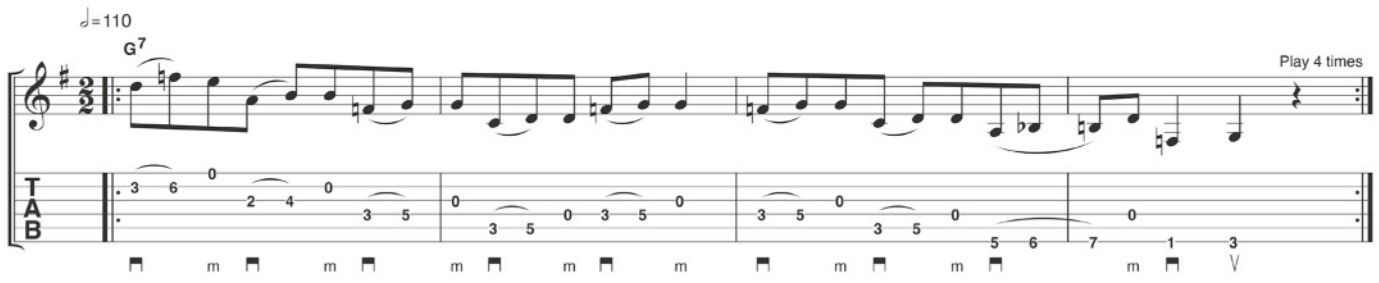

Country often features high-octane solos with plenty of fast chickin' picking. In our example we're using 'pick and fingers'-style hybrid picking as employed by virtuosos like Johnny Hiland. The same picking pattern is repeated to create a flowing lick. The picking pattern goes: downpick, hammer-on, then fingerpick the open string.

13 ACOUSTIC FLATPICKING

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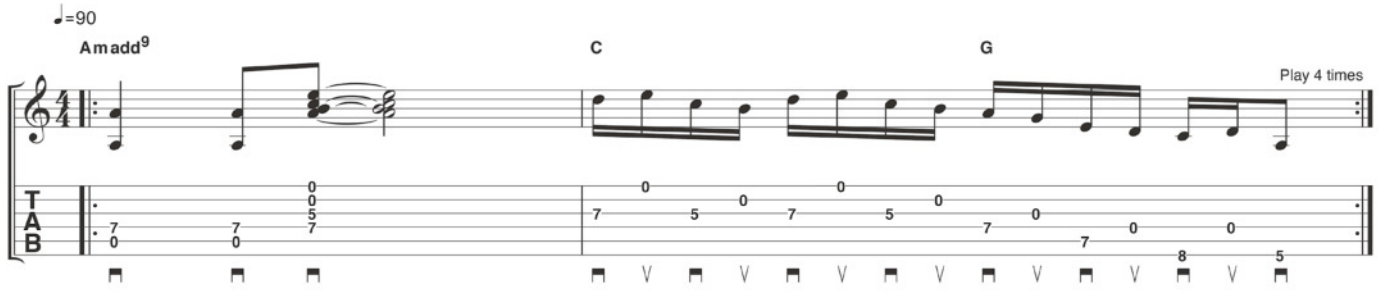

The flatpicking technique just means to use a plectrum as opposed to playing fingerstyle. Our example is inspired by the fast flatpicking abilities of guitarists like Molly Tuttle and Billy Strings. Notice how open strings are used to create a flowing, cascading lick.

14 VIRTUOSO INSTRUMENTAL SHRED

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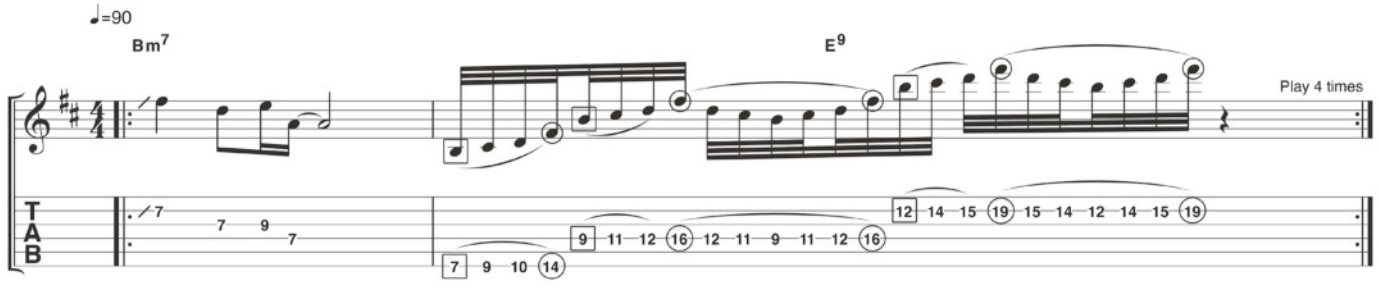

For this example, we're increasing the wow factor by introducing a bit of two-handed tapping – a mainstay of contemporary shredders like Plini and Guthrie Govan. The idea here is to use a four-note-per-string fingering on the sixth, fourth and second strings. The first finger hammers on and is followed by fingers three and four.

15 MATH-ROCK

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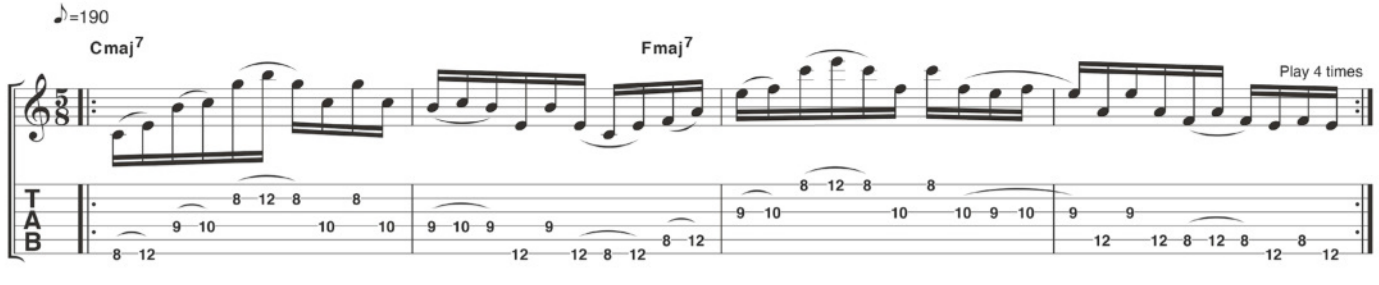

For this final example we're using the rather math-rock time signature of 5/8, as used by Covet in songs like *Lovespell*. To create a flowing line we have linked the Cmaj7 and Fmaj7 arpeggios. The string-skipping element makes these arpeggios easier to play in patterns, as opposed to just straight up or straight down.

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QUEEN
I WANT IT ALL

Taken from Queen's *The Miracle* album, *I Want It All* is one of rock's greatest anthems. TG examines this classic Brian May composition

Photo Getty **Guitars and backing** Charlie Griffiths

Throughout their incredible career, Queen have touched on almost every style of music, from rock, pop and ballads to funk, trad-jazz and opera. This diversity reflects that each member was an accomplished songwriter – Messrs Mercury, May, Deacon and Taylor could all claim to have written a worldwide chart-topping hit. The band's guitarist Brian May alone provided 22!

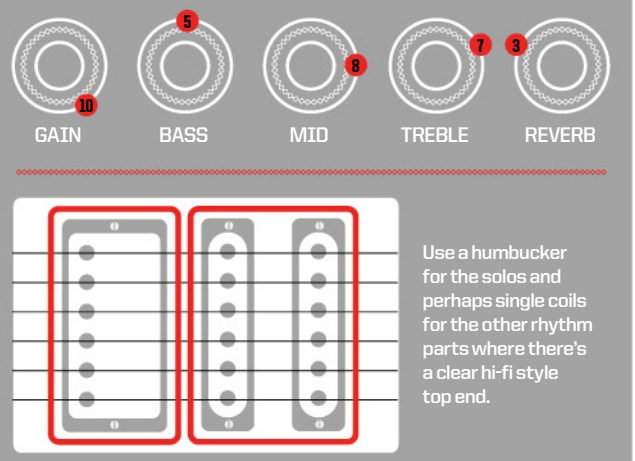
1989's *I Want It All* marked a return to the band's hard-rock roots. The track highlights Brian's ability to create simple but powerful guitar hooks and showcases his wonderfully melodic blues-rock soloing. Our transcription is an amalgamation of the acoustic, rhythm and lead guitars heard on the record.

SOUND ADVICE

Everything you need to know before playing 'I Want It All'

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL OVERDRIVE

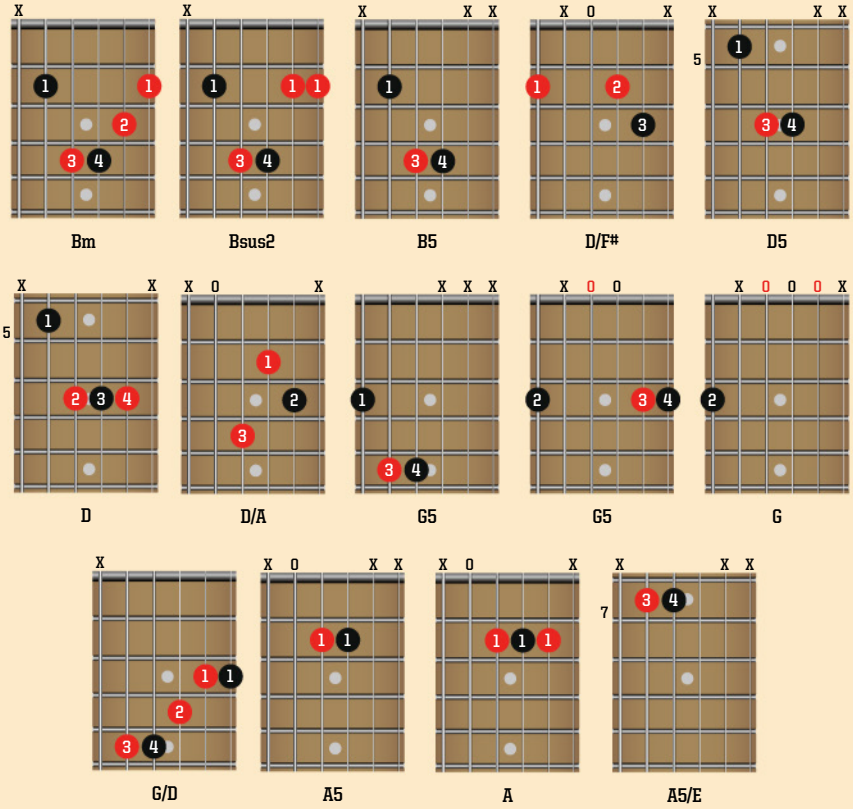


Use a humbucker for the solos and perhaps single coils for the other rhythm parts where there's a clear hi-fi style top end.

With single coils and a brace of tone controls, a Fender Strat is a good alternative to Brian's guitar. That said, the complex switching system of the Red Special does allow for humbucker-esque sounds, so an HSS guitar configuration is ideal. Consider using fresh strings for that late-Queen-era 'hi-fi' quality. If you don't have a Vox AC30, dial in a medium gain tone with lots of midrange. Brian uses a treble booster, but an EQ pedal or even the tone control on an overdrive pedal may suffice. He also uses a sixpence as a pick – and the clink of metal on string is key to his tone, so use a 5p piece for authenticity. A digital reverb is a better option than a spring unit. Ideally turn up the volume of the reverb quite high to add body, but keep the decay below a second.

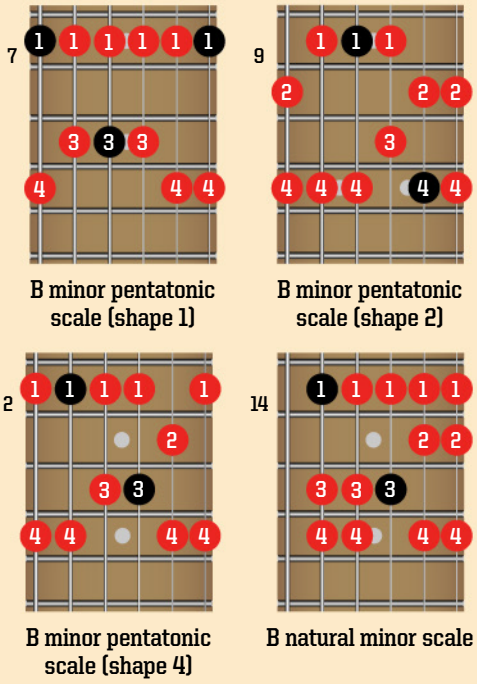
CHORDS

There are no surprises as far as the guitar chords go – these are a mixture of open chords, powerchords and the occasional barre. Notice that Brian doesn't play every string in every shape. Only the man himself knows exactly why he arranged it the way he did, but we'd suggest that the rich, dense mix benefits from the tight, controlled sound that these smaller shapes give.



SCALES

The opening solo lick is pure 'shape 1' B minor pentatonic scale. Shapes 2 and 4 also feature in the guitar solo. The descending runs at the end of the solo and the end of the track are natural minor- scale-based. A little knowledge of these scale shapes will give you an insight into how Brian forms these licks.



QUEEN
I WANT IT ALL

FULL TAB

I WANT IT ALL
Words and Music by Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor and John Deacon
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QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Intro

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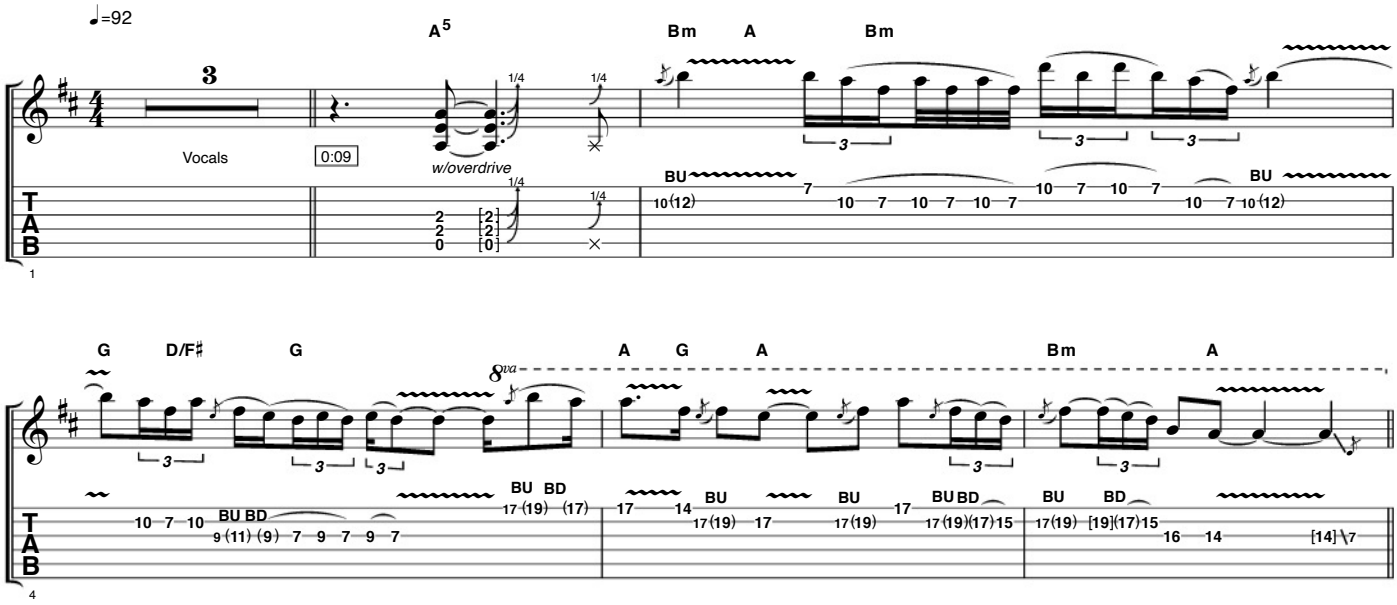

The song begins with this short B minor pentatonic-based solo. The first line is played in the first of the five shapes with most of the work being done with the third finger repeatedly hammering-on and pulling-off on the top two strings. The last two bars use shape 4 of the minor pentatonic scale.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Verse 1

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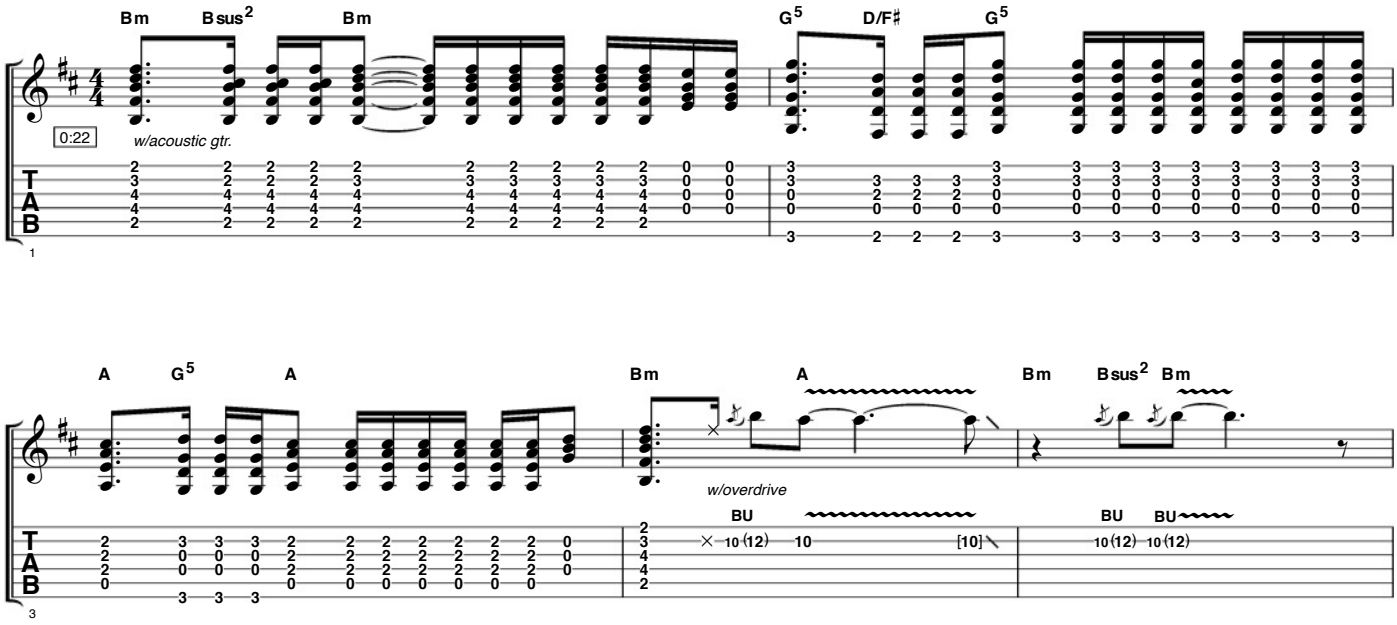

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Verse 1 (cont'd)

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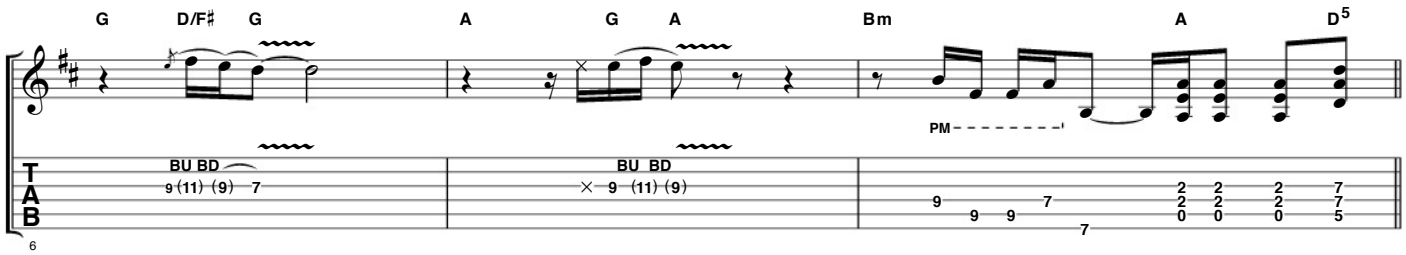

Here we've arranged a part that includes the strummed acoustic line (you could opt for a clean electric, though) and Brian's lead fills. On the original track, the acoustic plays throughout the section, but there's enough info in bars 1 to 3 to help you improvise the rest. Deliver the lead lines with plenty of vibrato.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Pre-chorus 1

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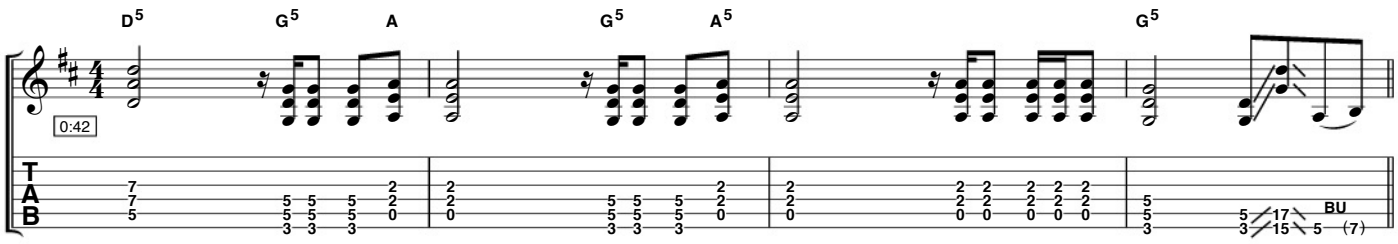

This section is all powerchords. Make the feel steady and consistent by keeping your pick-hand moving down and up in constant 16th notes, only hitting the strings when needed. The end phrase is essentially an up-and-down slide with a powerchord, but the exact notes and timing aren't crucial here.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Chorus 1

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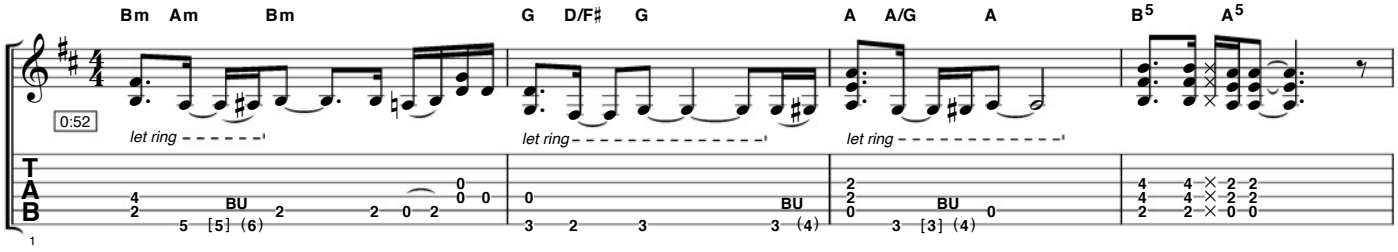
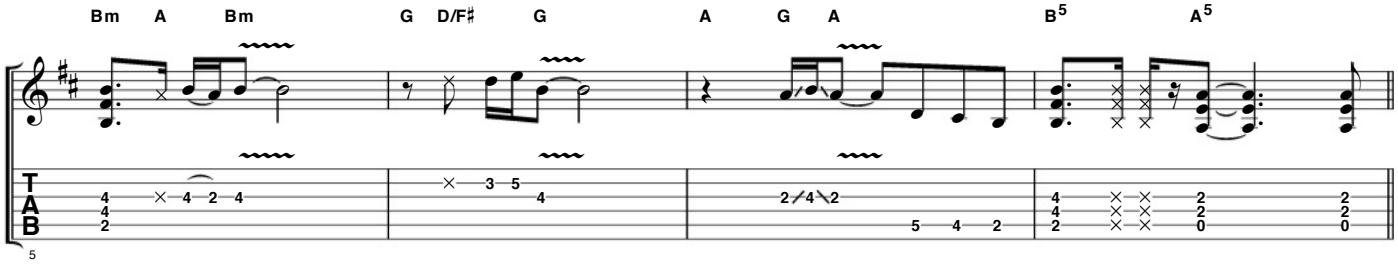
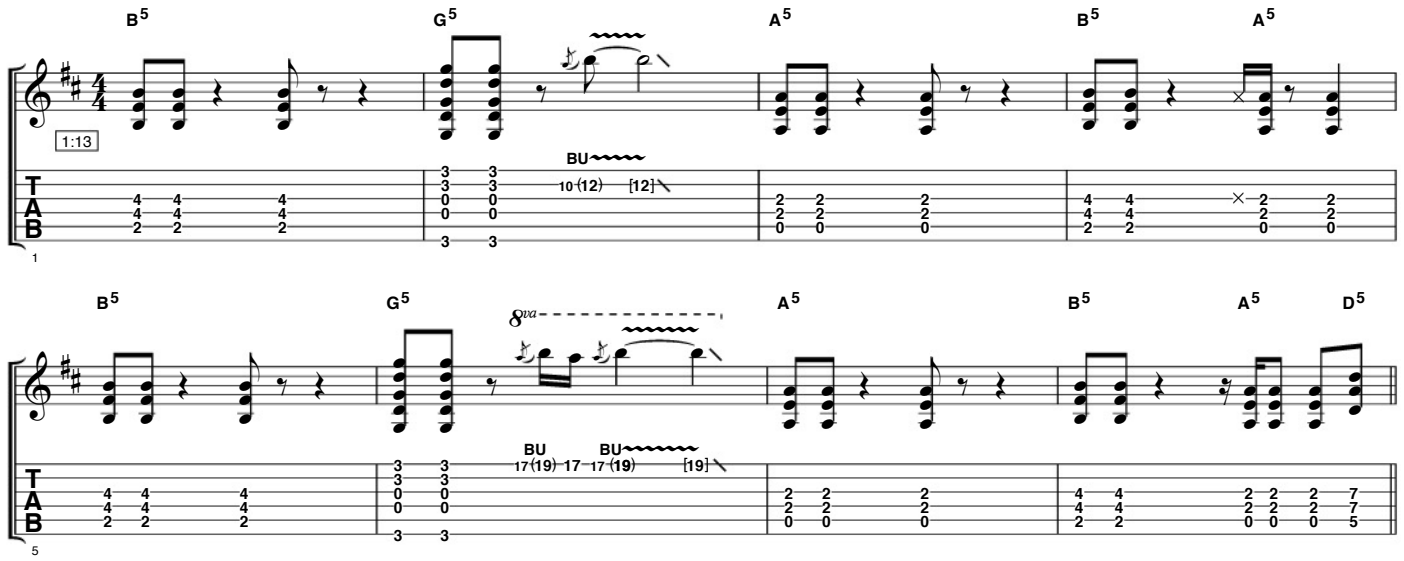




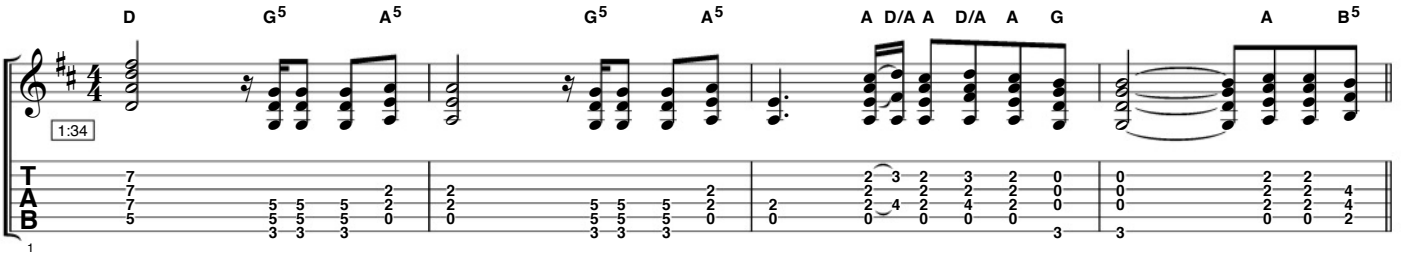
The rich, dense mix of the original track makes the opening bars of this electric guitar part hard to make out. The first half of each bar essentially follows the chords played on the synth, but with those sixth-string bends adding some attitude.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL **Verse 2** **bit.ly/tg372audio**



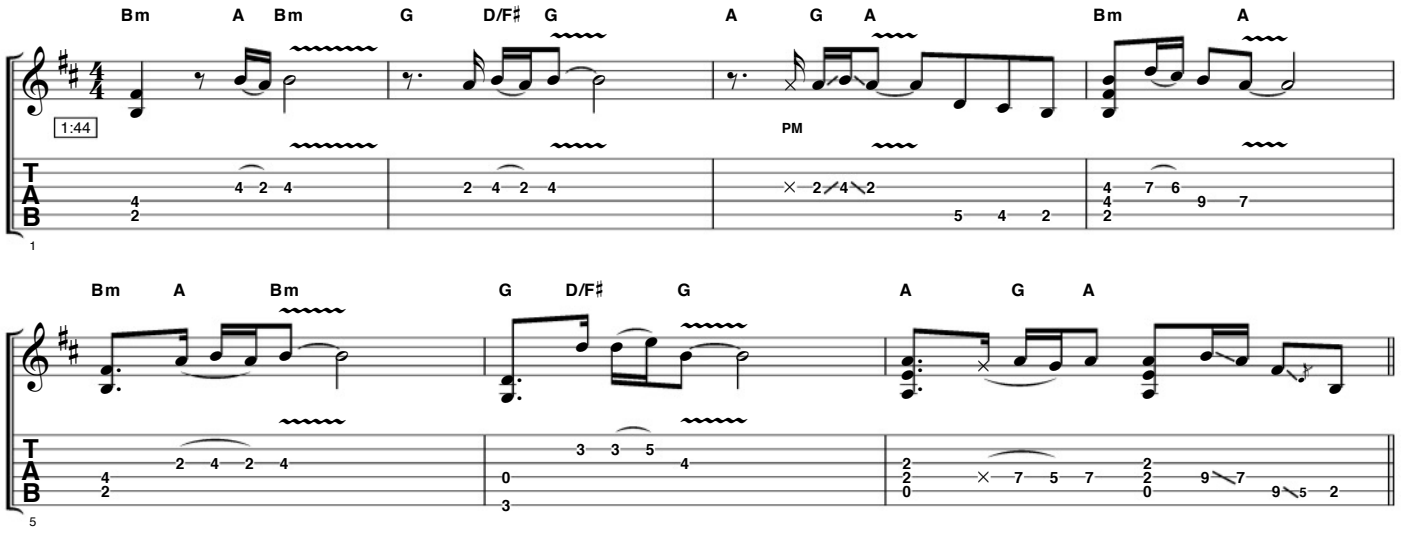
Here, the acoustic strumming gives way to staccato-feel powerchords. There should be no string noise or feedback during the rests, so gently rest the underside of your fretting hand against the idle strings as you play. In particular, make a point of silencing the strings before those lead phrases in bars 2 and 6.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL **Pre-chorus 2** **bit.ly/tg372audio**



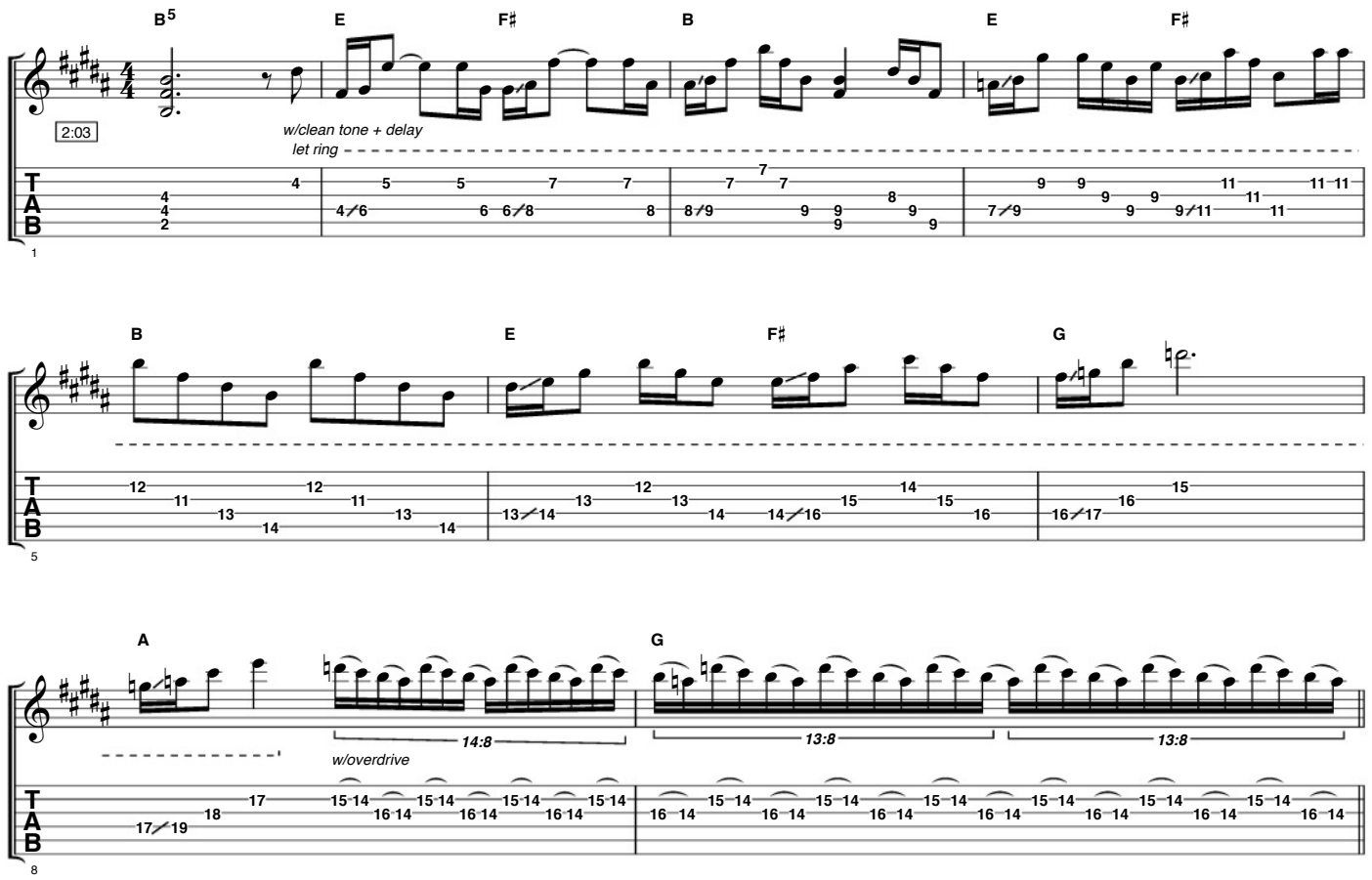
This is a fairly simple rhythm part, and shouldn't present too much of a challenge. The hammered-on chord (from A to D/A) in bar 3 is a signature Brian May move and requires you to play the A chord as a first-finger barre so that you can hammer on with your second and third fingers.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL **Chorus 2** **bit.ly/tg372audio**



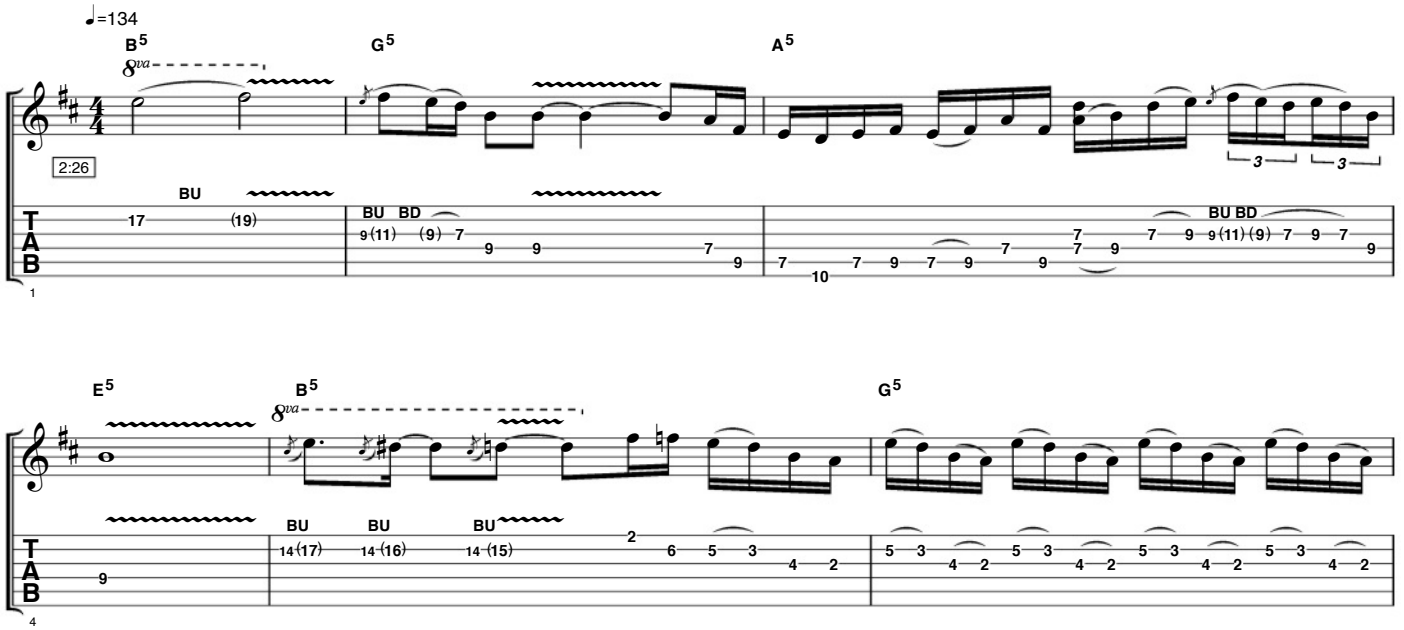
Here, we're focusing mainly on Brian's short lead fills that fall in between each vocal line. You could even leave the powerchords out altogether. The final few notes in bar 7 are an approximation of some slides along the strings. We've kept it 'in the scale', but the notes aren't crucial on this short line.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Bridge **bit.ly/tg372audio**

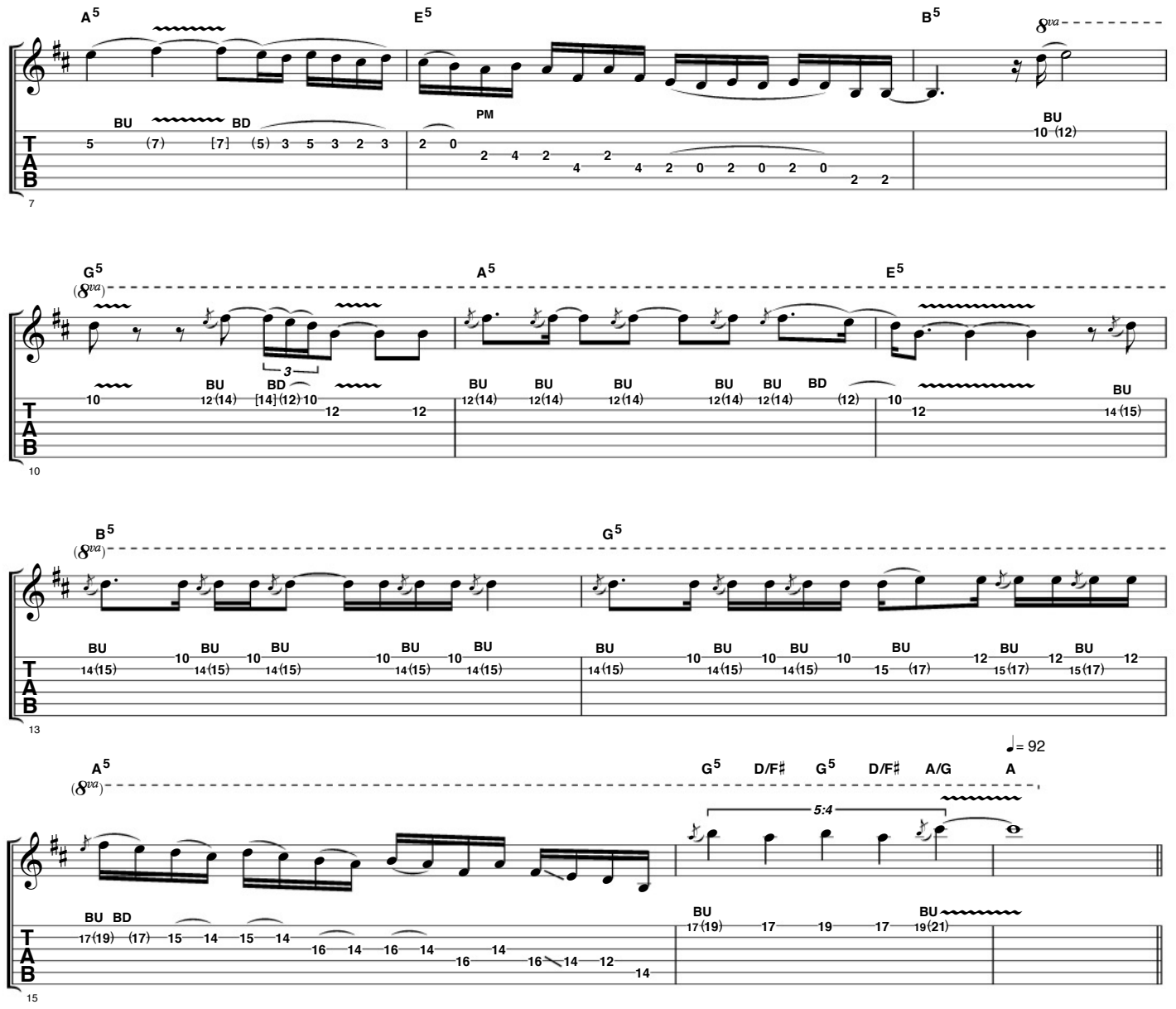


Form the shapes in bars 1 to 7 fully and pick as directed, allowing the notes to ring together. The lick in bar 8 is a challenge; if you play it live, the drummer will need to take the cue from you. If stuck, play the line as fast as you can and focus on hitting the first note of the following solo bang on time.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Solo **bit.ly/tg372audio**

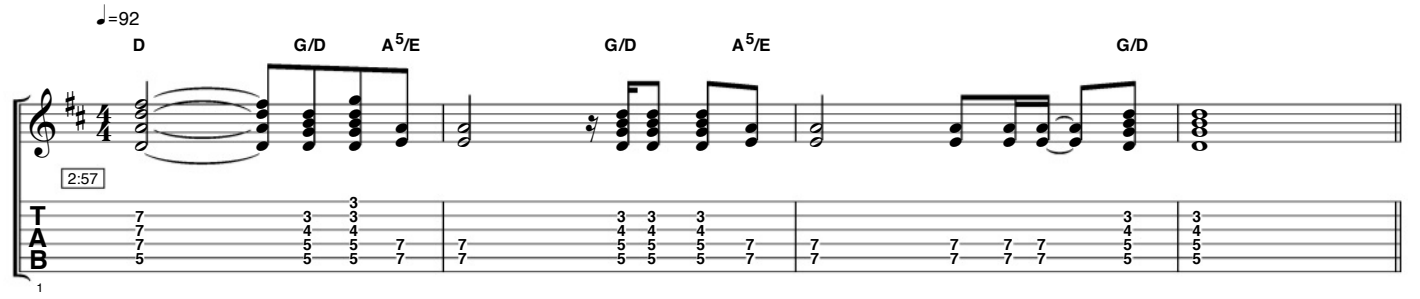


QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Solo (cont'd) **bit.ly/tg372audio**



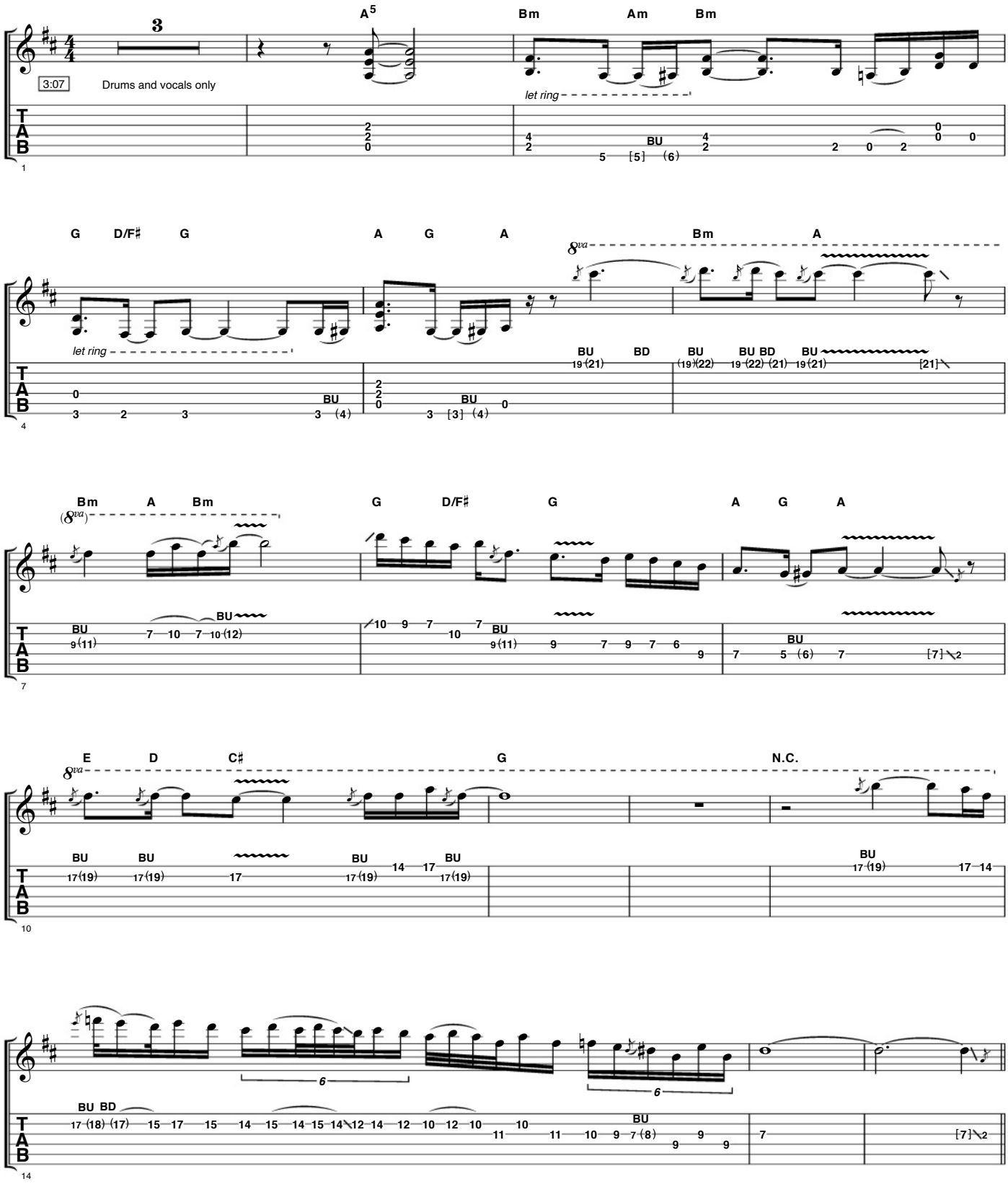
Much of this solo is played with evenly-spaced 16th-note lines based in the B natural minor and minor pentatonic scales. It's advisable to slow these challenging licks down and repeat with a metronome until smooth. No Brian May solo is complete without singing bends and vibrato, so pay attention to getting the pitching just right.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL Pre-chorus 3 **bit.ly/tg372audio**



After the faster tempo of the solo, the track returns to the original speed for this third pre-chorus. Rather than a pure powerchord approach, Brian uses major chords and powerchords for a triumphant sound. The mix is dense, so full six-string shapes aren't really necessary.

QUEEN I WANT IT ALL **Outro chorus** **bit.ly/tg372audio**



The closing lick is the biggest challenge here. A good approach is to break it into four distinct sections as indicated by the rhythmic groupings in the notation. Rather than emulating the rhythm beat-for-beat, aim to plant each of the four starting notes on the downbeats and fit the rest of the notes in as you develop a feel for it.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

ARCTIC MONKEYS FLUORESCENT ADOLESCENT

With its killer opening riff and adrenalin-fuelled rhythm work this Arctics classic will add instant street cred to your set

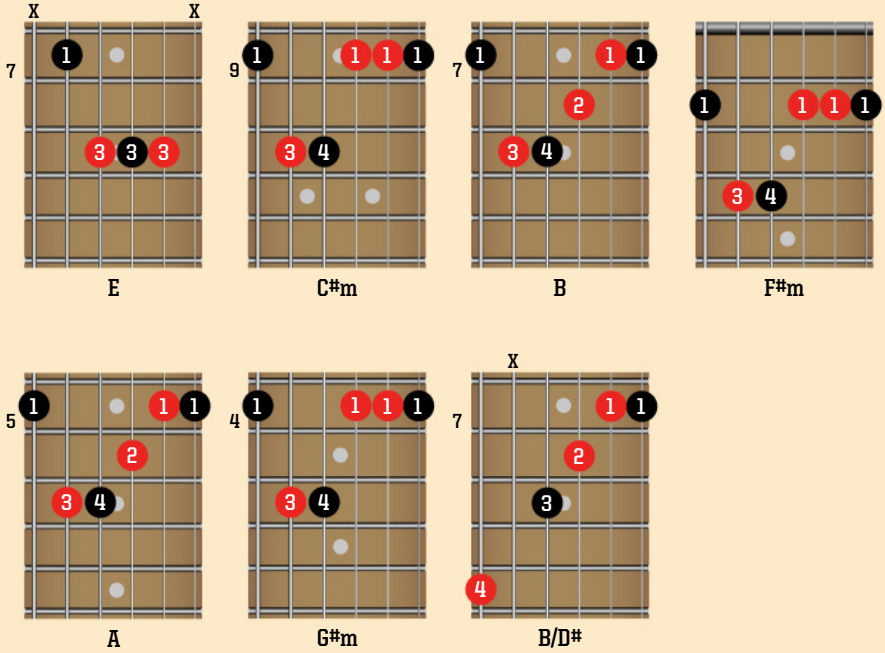
The Arctic Monkeys' edgy twin-guitar indie tones are delivered by Alex Turner and Jamie Cook. Here, in one of the band's biggest and best-loved songs, Alex takes the rhythm duties while Jamie outlines the main riffs.

The intro/verse isn't strictly bluesy, nor minor pentatonic. Instead, Cook's riff follows the root notes of the intro/verse chords, with the gaps being filled with runs from the E major pentatonic scale. It's played entirely at the 2nd and 4th frets, so it falls neatly under your first and third fingers without any need for position shifts.

Turner's rhythm work is based entirely on well-known barre chords, with plenty of fretting hand 'choking' to create tight, punchy staccato strums where needed. You should be able to hear the interplay between the riff and chords – and a clear staccato technique is key to giving each part its own space. We've tabbed extracts of both guitar parts for you.

CHORDS

Fluorescent Adolescent is played using barre chords throughout, so if you find finger fatigue creeping in try playing just the top four strings of each shape. The B/D# is played as a B chord by the guitar with the bass playing the D# note but we've given you a chord shape to try out here. It's a bit of a stretch so it'll suit you if you have good reach with your pinkie! If it's too tough then simply play the top three strings of the B chord.



FLUORESCENT ADOLESCENT
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Guitars and backing PhilCapone Photo Getty

Backing track (bit.ly/tg372audio)
This song comes with a full backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

Fluorescent Adolescent

Intro

E / / / C#m / / / F#m / / / B / / / x3

Verse 1

E
You used to get it in your fishnets
C#m
Now you only get it in your night dress
F#m
Discarded all the naughty nights for niceness
B
Landed in a very common crisis
E
Everything's in order in a black hole
C#m
Nothing seems as pretty as the past though
B F#m
That Bloody Mary's lacking in Tabasco
B
Remember when you used to be a rascal?

Chorus

F#m
Oh, the boy's a slag
B
The best you ever had
F#m
The best you ever had
B F#m
Is just a memory and those dreams
B
Weren't as daft as they seem
F#m
As daft as they seemed
A
My love, when you dream them up

Verse 2

E
Flicking through a little book of sex tips
C#m
Remember when the boys were all electric?
B G#m F#m
Now, when she's told she's gonna get it
B
I'm guessing that she'd rather just forget it
E
Clinging to not getting sentimental
C#m
Said she wasn't going, but she went still
B G#m F#m
Likes her gentlemen to not be gentle

Was it a Mecca dauber or a betting pencil?

Repeat Chorus

Chorus Tag

G#m C#m
Oh, Flo, where did you go?
F#m
Where did you go?
G#m F#m
Where did you go? Oh oh

Interlude

E / / / C#m / / / F#m / / / B / / /

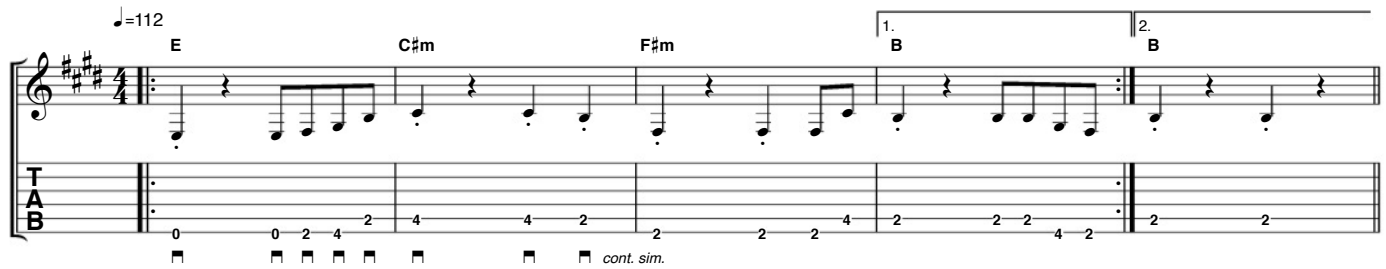
Bridge

E C#m
You're falling about
F#m B
You took a left off Last Laugh Lane
E C#m B
Just soundin' it out
F#m B B/D#
But you're not coming back again
E C#m B G#m
You're falling about
F#m B
You took a left off Last Laugh Lane
E C#m B G#m
You were just soundin' it out
F#m B
But you're not coming back again

Outro

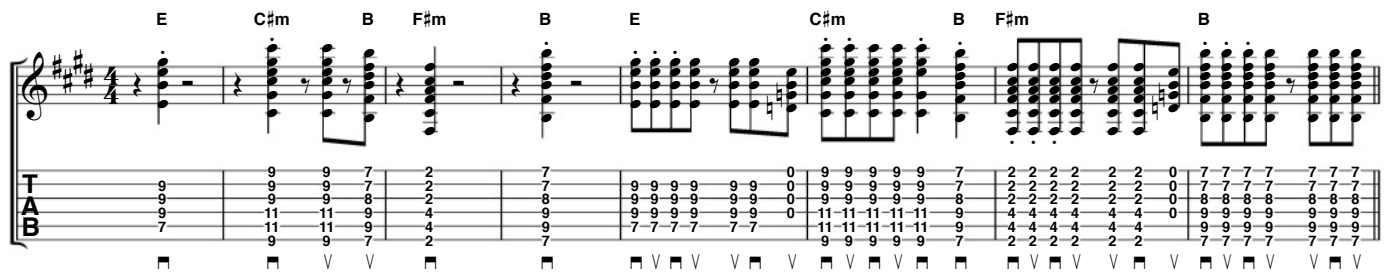
E
You used to get it in your fishnets
C#m
Now you only get it in your night dress
B G#m F#m
Discarded all the naughty nights for niceness
B
Landed in a very common crisis
E
Everything's in order in a black hole
C#m
Nothing seems as pretty as the past though
B G#m F#m
That Bloody Mary's lacking in Tabasco
B C#m
Remember when you used to be a rascal?

ARCTIC MONKEYS FLOURESCENT ADOLESCENT Intro/verse riff **bit.ly/tg372audio**



For authenticity use downpicking here. Keeping your fret hand in 2nd position (there are no 1st-fret notes) means you can use your first and third fingers throughout.

ARCTIC MONKEYS FLOURESCENT ADOLESCENT Intro/verse rhythm **bit.ly/tg372audio**



Alex Turner plays this part using alternate strumming but with occasional breaks to the down-up motion – and that means you can take a fairly free approach yourself. Notice that bars 5 to 8 contain both staccato and regular-length chords, so make sure to release pressure wherever you see a dot over a note.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION

Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS

We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

*WHAT IS GAS?

Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL

You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT

TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS

We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD

TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

PLATINUM AWARD

Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

Total Guitar PLATINUM AWARD

SUPERB, A BEST BUY | EXCELLENT | ABOVE AVERAGE KIT | SOME ISSUES | POOR

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Vox's mini headphone guitar amp gets a royal ascent

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

KEELEY SUPER AT MOD OVERDRIVE

1 "A drive pedal that responds just like a tube amp" – we've heard that one before, but Andy Timmons's last pedal with Robert Keeley (the Halo Dual Echo) reminded us these guys know what they're doing so we're inclined to think this evolution of the Super Phat Mod Full Range Overdrive is one to watch, and hear! There's a Phat and Andy Timmons AT mode for single-coils and humbuckers, respectively.
£219
www.robertkeeley.com

PEDAL HAVEN STICKER PACK

2 We're loving the dilemma of whether to stick the 'Ask me about my pedalboard' or 'Don't ask me about my pedalboard' on your dearly beloved. And yes, guitar pedals ruined our life/bank balance, too! The stickers are available to buy separately for $3.99, in a pair or as a pack with free worldwide shipping. There are t-shirts available as well.
From $3.99
www.pedalhaven.com

ELECTRO-HARMONIX HELL MELTER

3 EHX's take on the Boss HM-2 chainsaw-tastic distortion pedal brings some extra fire to proceedings in the form of the Burn mode, boosting the internal voltage for increased headroom, less compression, and more attack. There's also a Normal mode for a more traditional take. A Dry control also allows players to blend their input signal, which could be great for bassists who want to go to, er, Hell.
£179
www.ehx.com

FENDER GEORGE HARRISON DARK HORSE RECORDS COLLECTION

4 Inspired by the record label Harrison founded in 1974 with initial signings Splinter and Ravi Shankar, this collection of two straps and a tin with guitar picks features the Dark Horse Records logo – depicting the seven-headed horse Uchchaisravas from Hindu mythology. The label was recently revived in a deal with Sony BMG, announced by George's son, Dhani.
Straps £42.99 each
Pick tin £10.99
www.fender.com

G7TH NASHVILLE CAPO

5 Perhaps these new colours for G7th's Nashville model might help our capos from falling into the same strange bottomless void where all our picks go? The Nashville is a simpler, trigger capo with one-hand fitting compared to the micrometer adjustment of G7th's original, and is now available in Red, White, Green and Blue in addition to Silver, Black and blingy 18kt Gold Plate.
From £24.99
www.g7th.com

Seymour Duncan
Seymour Duncan

CORT G300 GLAM

£829

Cort upgrades its G300 Pro with a posh-finished, all mahogany cracker

If you're looking for affordability in the contemporary electric guitar world, you'll know that Cort is the house brand of the giant Indonesian-based Cor-Tek organisation that makes a huge number of instruments for other brands, not least PRS and Manson. Cort may not have the brand-appeal of many of the other guitars it makes but their G300 Pro really put them on the serious guitar map. No surprise, then, for 2023 that the platform is being expanded. Along with a very tasty-looking satin goldtop version of the Pro, we get the new Raw and the Glam, which we're featuring here.

It's just a different finish, then? No. Admittedly the glossy Polar Ice Metallic burst finish will get you noticed, and the hardware and pickups are the same as that flagship Pro, but the body here swaps from basswood to African mahogany which is also used for the graphite-reinforced bolt-on neck. Like the Pro we get a 6mm thick maple cap although it's only the natural edge you can see. Contrasting the showy top finish, the body back and sides, and the neck back, are stained a deeper brown. You can see the body is a three-piece spread and it's lightly chambered too which helps to keep the weight to a good 7.4lbs.

While the Fender-like 25.5" scale length is obviously retained along with the 24 jumbo stainless steel frets, another change here is the switch from rosewood to ebony for the unbound, compound radius fingerboard. Yet the contemporary style which allows great access to the top frets doesn't mean it's solely for the shredders. The neck shape here is Fender-y in width with a pretty classic, full-shouldered C profile that's 21mm deep at the first fret and a little meatier by the 12th at 23mm. The thin, almost bare wood feel to the neck back is very boutique in style too and our sample was very well set up. That spoke wheel truss rod adjustor at the body end of the neck also means that any slight truss rod tweaks, if necessary, are very simple to execute.

If the craft is pretty faultless then, like the Pro, the hardware is an equal match. This is a seriously good vibrato system with down-bend to slack and up-bend, thanks to a back rout, of a minor 3rd on the G string. Once the strings were stretched and the guitar settled in, the tuning stability without a nut or saddle lock in sight proved very stable.

Now, if big beefy rock sounds are what you're after you could probably just hotwire the bridge Seymour Duncan JB to the output jack and conclude: job done. There's a reason this is one of Seymour Duncan's best-selling humbuckers, and has been for many years. Yes, tastes change and many players, not least those with expansive pedalboards,

> "AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GOOD CORT GUITARS HAVE BECOME"

1 CONSTRUCTION
Unlike the original G300 Pro, the Glam's neck and body are made from African mahogany. The body is lightly chambered and the neck features dual graphite rod reinforcement. Although the fingerboard retains its compound radius it switches from rosewood to ebony.

2 PICKUPS AND WIRING
The Glam follows the G300 Pro with its classic pair of Seymour Duncan humbuckers, the all-conquering JB at bridge and Jazz at neck. The five-way switch selects either or both humbuckers together; position four and two link both the inner slug coils or the outer screw coils of both humbuckers, respectively.

3 VIBRATO SYSTEM
Closely modelled on Gotoh's 510 vibrato, the two-post Cort CFA-III vibrato is all steel with a tension adjustable, push-fit arm. We also get rear-locking tuners with staggered height string posts and a friction-reducing Graph Tech Black Tusq XL nut. In combination it's a seriously good vibrato system.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Chambered African mahogany with 6mm maple cap

NECK: African mahogany with carbon graphite reinforcement, bolt-on

SCALE: 648mm (25.5")

FINGERBOARD: Ebony/12-15.75" compound radius

FRETS: 24, jumbo stainless steel

PICKUPS: Seymour Duncan JB (TB4, bridge) and Jazz (SH2N, neck) direct-mount humbuckers

CONTROLS: Master volume and tone, five-way lever pickup selector switch

HARDWARE: Cort CFA-III two-post six-saddle vibrato, Cort staggered-post rear locking tuners (chrome-plated)

FINISH: Polar Ice Metallic burst (as reviewed)

CONTACT: 440 Distribution, www.cortguitars.com

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Photography Olly Curtis

Raw Power!

Along with the Glam, the G300 Raw is another new-for-2023 model

Yes, Glam and Raw are pretty unusual names but rather accurate. So, while our Glam has its pretty showy finish over a maple top, the Raw – slightly cheaper at £799 – swaps that for a rather nicely figured, centre-joined 6mm-thick walnut top. It's finished in a natural satin, too, creating a very workhorse, boutique-like vibe. Aside from that though the Raw shares the Glam's overall construction style, hardware and pickups. Not surprisingly when we A/B'd the two guitars they felt and played identically: the Raw, if anything, suggested a slightly more scooped midrange. We might be splitting hairs, though: separated by the difference between a 6mm slice of top wood, it's the choice of finish that'll sway you!

might prefer something that's a little flatter in terms of EQ, but straight into virtually any gained amp, its midrange clout is always impressive.

But there's a lot more subtlety here if you need it. The Jazz at neck is a much more vintage-voiced affair with clarity that, certainly on this platform and through a clean amp channel, displays depth and chime: wind the controls back a little and it's pretty, well, jazzy. Raise the gain though and you'll hear a very vocal lead tone. Position four on the five-way switch (the slug single coils of each humbucker combined in parallel) certainly suits those funk numbers in your function band's set list; position two (the screw single coils in parallel) has a little more bite and will get you through those songs where you need almost country twang. It's very fast to drive, too, with the volume pulled back you lose a little sizzle and pulling the tone back works effectively not least to round things out if the gain or fuzz gets a little too fizzy. It's not designed to satisfy the 60s stylist but just like the Pro, it's a near-perfect guitar for any player needing to cover a lot of ground quickly.

Is there anything we don't like? Well, let's be honest, this finish isn't going to appeal to everyone, is it? Some more classic options would certainly suit what we hear coming out of our various test amps and the virtually identical new Raw model (see Raw Power! boxout) goes almost too far in the opposite direction. But the subtly beefier voice here, with crisp clarity if you want, makes it a very viable option to the Pro and another example of just how good Cort guitars have become.

Dave Burrluck

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	✪✪✪✪✪
SOUND QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
VALUE FOR MONEY	✪✪✪✪✪
BUILD QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
USABILITY	✪✪✪✪✪
OVERALL RATING	✪✪✪✪✪

ALSO TRY...

YAMAHA REVSTAR II RSS20 25TH — £649

This dual-humbucker model features a chambered mahogany body, graphite-reinforced neck and stainless steel frets, plus the Focus Switch passive boost.

HARLEY BENTON FUSION-T — £399

This T-style from HB's 25th anniversary range sports stainless steel frets on a maple bolt-on neck, with a Wilkinson trem, rear lock tuners and 'hot-vintage' Tesla humbuckers.

PRS SE STANDARD 24-08 — £675

We don't get stainless steel frets or graphite neck reinforcement, but it's the PRS TCI 'S' humbucking pickups, along with individual pickup mini-switches ,that make this special.

INTRODUCING

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Words Alex Lynham Photography Olly Curtis

DOD REISSUES

DOD pedals are back, and they're starting with the classics

DOD started in 1973, producing pedals until they were bought out by Digitech's parent company in 1990. At a similar place in the market to MXR, they were most commonly found in the US, using the marketing tagline of 'America's Pedal'. In their range was a set of staples like drive, chorus and delay that, while hampered by a somewhat dodgy footswitch, remain popular today.

While a number of the units were clones, copies or adaptations of other circuits, several highly original units were built in the 1990s, becoming cult favourites. Many of the 90s units were designed by Jason Lamb, earning the unofficial name of Lamb-series.

The current series of reissues covers units from both the early 70s and 80s series as well as the 90s boxes. These are all housed in lighter-weight aluminium enclosures with true bypass and now-standard 9V DC power jack. For the more 'standard' pedals, the attraction is partly their workhorse reputation and partly price. Some are quite different to competitors at a comparable price point, such as the Compressor 280.

Like many vintage pedals, where there's a cachet around them, any boutique clones or reissues are expensive enough to miss the point of why they were popular in the first place. As a result, these reissues are somewhat timely, even though some will look familiar from the 2010s.

In the last ten years, employee Tom Cram successfully made the case for revitalizing the brand. DOD was given licence to experiment, making new pedals like the Carcosa and Rubberneck delay. They also broke new ground, producing collaboration pedals like the Boneshaker. This was abruptly shuttered towards the end of the decade.

This series of reissues was announced following DOD/Digitech being bought out by Cor-Tek, the parent company of Cort guitars. Tom and various other employees have been reinstated, and it looks like DOD may once again be a going concern. These new reissues thus seek to achieve greater authenticity than past reissues, while also marking a return of ambition to DOD.

PREAMP 250 £99

Classic, or dated?

The DOD Preamp 250 was originally a lightly-modified MXR Distortion+ with a few part changes. There have been several reissues, including one using the JRC4558 op-amp found in the Tube Screamer, as well as one using a KA4558 chip. This reissue returns to the LM741, the chip in the original, mirroring the bill of materials for the Distortion+. Where the pedals differ in tone is in their diodes. The Distortion+ used germanium diodes, while the 250 employed silicon diodes. When the circuit is so simple, the type of clipping diodes makes a big difference in terms of overall tone and feel. Especially when arranged in a hard-clipping configuration, the parts choice matters greatly for headroom and timbre. For such a lean circuit, the 250 is relatively articulate and punchy as a distortion.

However, as the preamp name suggests, it functions best at lower and mid gain settings with the level up. Its lack of proper tone controls limits its utility as a pre, forcing reliance on an amp or EQ following the 250. That said, there's a lot of volume gain on offer, and it does a brilliant job of pushing tube amps into saturation. It also stacks well with other pedals. Like the Distortion+, it is commonly paired with a fuzz for extra gain and compression. This can effectively distinguish lead parts from rhythm, where some pedals like the Big Muff, with its mid scoop, can get lost in the mix.

Perhaps the biggest drawback to the Preamp 250 is that, while it's undoubtedly simple and effective, there are so many alternatives today. For an open sounding preamp, there are boost and preamp pedals and transparent drives like the Timmy, which boast better EQ options.

AT A GLANCE

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

CONTROLS: Gain, Level

POWER: 9VDC Centre-negative or battery

ENVELOPE FILTER 440 £105

Best tones for bass?

The Envelope Filter is one of the most enduring pedals from this era of DOD, simply due to its wide availability. Envelope filter and auto-wah on guitar is an effect that is niche by design. Most players who use filter effects tend to stick to the expressive capabilities of the wah pedal. That said, there's always the odd player who prefers the more synth-like, locked-in sweep of an envelope filter. The controls here are deceptively simple. The level control is for the sensitivity of the envelope, or how it will react to your playing, and the range is the frequency range of the envelope sweep. There's a lot of depth to be found between these two, and dialling them in for a sound that works for you will likely take some time and experimentation.

Like any synth-style pedal, there's a strong sense that the Envelope Filter is designed more for bass than guitar. Switching over to a bass with J-Bass pickups, it's no surprise to find that it indeed does work well, particularly when paired with a fuzz. The voicing control can be used to emphasise a different register in the sweep, making it work better for bass. Whether on bass or guitar, the Envelope Filter is incredibly sensitive to pedal order. This means you may have to re-jig an existing 'board to fit around it. The most dramatic effects are to be had when all distortions, drives, and fuzzes are following it rather than in front. In front, they mess with the sensitivity and the result is often scratchy and weak. With a decent distortion after it, the 440 comes alive. Dramatic drop tuned sweeps emphasise percussive hits, and the filter opening throughout a phrase can create attention grabbing lead lines.

AT A GLANCE

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

CONTROLS: Level, Voice, Range

POWER: 9VDC Centre-negative or battery

COMPRESSOR 280 £105

The hidden gem

When looking at simplified two-knob compressors, the main competitor to the 280 is the MXR Dyna Comp. The Compressor 280 is an optical compressor. This means that the amplitude of the input signal drives a light element, which is then detected by a light-dependent resistor. As the optical cell detects more light, it attenuates the signal further. Obviously, this has knock-on effects for the timbre, response and feel of the device. Although you might intuit that the speed of light, being a universal physical constant, is fast, optical compressors, in pedal or studio form tend to have a slower response than FET or VCA compressors. This results in a smoother triggering of input attenuation past the threshold point. Also, frequency impacts how the light source performs, meaning that the attack time is partly frequency dependent.

If you're used to the OTA MXR compression, then the 280 might come as a bit of a shock. It's much less coloured, and more subtle at lower comp settings. It's intuitive, with only two knobs. One is the amount of compression, and one is the level, essentially the make-up gain. Turn the compression all the way up, and high-fretboard clean notes on the top strings ring out, while the bottom strings are tamed and choked. Back off the comp slightly and you'll find a usable, still heavily-compressed tone.

At the other end of the spectrum, an always-on tone glue for live use is easy to dial in with the comp backed off and the level control a little past noon. Delay lines have a bit more body to them, and the different registers on the guitar are evened out.

AT A GLANCE

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

CONTROLS: Comp, Output

POWER: 9VDC Centre-negative or battery

GONKULATOR £129

Put a gonk on it

The Gonkulator is a re-imagining of one of the most eccentric pedals from DOD's 90s stable, the Gonkulator Modulator. The Gonkulator Modulator is a divisive pedal in that you'll probably either love or hate. It was created by smashing together the company's FX69 Grunge distortion and a ring modulator. The controls, suck, smear, gunk and heave, didn't exactly help the player find their function. Then again, part of the joy for fans of the pedal is this obliqueness, forcing the player to experiment. On the original, the carrier frequency for the ring modulator was fixed. Although there was a trimpot inside the pedal, it was not intended to be changed by the player. The reissue is more ergonomic, and the carrier frequency is now on the outside of the pedal, allowing full control over it. This unlocks some radically different options for the ring mod. The controls, gain, distortion, output, frequency and ring, now describe their function, allowing the player to dial in all the wacky modem sounds they could want.

With the ring mod dialled back, there's an unusally-voiced distortion useful for off-the-wall lead parts. Still, even with the controls on the outside, the Gonkulator essentially does one thing. There are no rhythm sounds here or wider versatility. It's an unapologetically strange pedal, and this reissue will corner the market of players that want something this strange on their 'board. If ring mod is your thing, then the Gonkulator also works well on bass. If anything, it's easier to see how in alternative or indie contexts it could be used on bass for attention grabbing lines in a breakdown or pre-chorus.

AT A GLANCE

SOCKETS: Input, Output, Power

CONTROLS: Gain, Dist, Output, Freq, Ring

POWER: 9VDC Centre-negative or battery

ROUND-UP

Final word – some killer, some filler. Then again, it's early doors for the new-look DOD, so watch this space...

While it's good to see these pedals and the DOD brand return, they're hitting a crowded place in the market with a slimmer, vintage feature set. Where the pedals can't punch above their weight, they're likely to be crowded out. As much as interest in the DOD 250 has increased thanks to some influencer videos and famous players, it may struggle to stand out against tough competition. Still, it sounds good and is affordable, and that's enough to have some success. Similarly, the 440 is a good value, dynamic-sounding envelope filter, with a lot going for it if you're a bassist looking for some new tones. The Gonkulator certainly has unique covered, but is arguably too niche to move the needle, even if it is a cool pedal in the right section of the right song. The most likely winner from this list then is the Compressor 280, which is an excellent-sounding, intuitive optical compressor. It could well challenge the Boss and MXR comps on the market as the go-to first compressor for many players. Even if you've already got a comp, it may be that the smoother, more open voicing of the 280 would better suit your playing.

PREAMP 250

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★½☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

COMPRESSOR 280

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

ENVELOPE FILTER 440

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

GONKULATOR

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★½☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

CONTACT: 440 Distribution, digitech.com/b/dod/

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REVERB
BASS
TREBLE
VOLUME
1
2
INSTRUMENTS
Fender
Tone Master

1 CONTROL PANEL Classic Fender styling looks as good today as it did six decades ago, with a practically identical control panel and a period-correct front grill badge.

2 OUTPUT POWER CONTROL You can drop output power down from 12 simulated valve watts to 0.3 of a watt in six steps, with a very useful cabinet-emulated line out.

3 LOUDSPEAKER The Tone Master Princeton Reverb uses a re-issue Jensen C10R loudspeaker. Now made in Italy, it's one of the types that were fitted to original Princetons.

FENDER TONE MASTER PRINCETON REVERB

Fender's iconic small combo is replicated in the digital domain

The Princeton is one of the original Fender amplifiers with its origins way back in 1946, when it debuted alongside Leo Fender's original Deluxe and Professional 'Woody' amplifiers; the very first Fender-badged products. The Princeton evolved through the 1950's 'tweed' era before a fundamental design change resulting in the short-lived but highly coveted 1961 brown-panel combo, which evolved into the later black panel amplifier, with the legendary reverb-equipped version arriving in 1964. Now Fender have resurrected the classic black panel Princeton Reverb as the latest addition to their Tone Master range, which uses digital technology to recreate classic valve designs.

Viewed from the front, the Tone Master Princeton Reverb looks practically identical to its 1960s ancestor. The lightweight pine cabinet is covered in thick black Tolex, with a chrome Fender badge, traditional silver sparkle grille and a small 'Tone Master' plate in the bottom right corner. A pair of high- and low-gain input jacks feed skirted mirror top controls for volume, treble and bass, with a level control for the reverb effect and speed and intensity knobs for the Princeton Reverb's built-in tremolo. Look around the back, though, and you can see the digital difference, as there are no transformers or valves. A six-position rotary switch varies the class D output from a digitally-simulated 12 watts of valve power down to just 0.3 watts. Other features include a cabinet-simulated balanced XLR, together with a level control and a jack socket for the supplied two-button footswitch.

> "THIS PRINCETON IS AN ALMOST-PERFECT RECREATION"

Unlike conventional modelling amplifiers, there are no presets or menus to navigate, with all of the Tone Master's processing power focused on authentically recreating the original Princeton valve circuit. The classic black-panel sound is spot on, staying clean up until roughly halfway, after which the amp progressively adds overdrive. On a valve Princeton, full power would be unsociably loud, however the Tone Master lets you tame the maxed out sounds right down to whisper levels or even switch them off for silent recording. The cabinet emulations are very impressive and work well for studio or live use, while the effects are on a par with the very best studio hardware, especially the convolution reverb, which uses an entire core of the Princeton Reverb's quad-core DSP.

Fender's Tone Master Princeton Reverb is an almost-perfect recreation of its legendary 60s ancestor; for us the reverb is perhaps a little too bright, while the tremolo could have slightly more speed and intensity range. That's the only downside of the Tone Master's non-programmable concept: the amp is what it is. It's also quite expensive for a digital product, unless you compare it with the all-valve version. Nevertheless, it's a brilliant leap into the future.

Nick Guppy

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	✪✪✪✪✪
SOUND QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
VALUE FOR MONEY	✪✪✪✪✪
BUILD QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
USABILITY	✪✪✪✪✪
OVERALL RATING	✪✪✪✪✪

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Digital modelling 1x10" combo

CHANNELS: One

OUTPUT: 50 watts RMS class D power stage (simulates 12 valve watts) with output power switchable to 6, 3, 1.5, 0.75 and 0.3 watts

CONTROLS: Volume, bass, middle, treble. Reverb level, tremolo (vibrato) speed and intensity

SOCKETS: High- and low-gain input jacks, cabinet-simulated line out with balanced XLR, footswitch socket, USB socket on chassis underside for firmware updates

LOUDSPEAKERS: One 10" Jensen C10R

WEIGHT: 9kg

DIMENSIONS: [HxWxD] 406 x 505 x 241mm

FINISH: Black vinyl with silver sparkle speaker grille

CONTACT: Fender, www.fender.com

Photography Olly Curtis

vol
dist
tone
decay
mix
D>R
R>D
MELEE
WALRUSAUDIO
sustain
bypass

1 JOYSTICK The joystick controls distortion and reverb mix, but not reverb decay.

2 TONE SWITCH Sensible presets for the three-way switches mean you don't miss a dedicated pot... too much.

3 SUSTAIN SWITCH Freeze and reverb swell modes are a footswitch away.

WALRUS AUDIO MELEE £299

A joystick-controlled reverb: slam-dunk or gimmick? You decide...

Maybe 'fad' is a bit harsh, but several years ago there was a brief demand for pedals with joysticks, presumably driven by their popularity in modular synth setups. The most famous of these was the Walrus Janus, a tremolo-fuzz that looked more like a games console controller than a pedal. Unfortunately, the Janus felt like a bit of a missed opportunity. The joystick for the fuzz side didn't control parameters that were more inspiring as a joystick than as normal potentiometers. Now, Walrus have returned with the Melee, a joystick-controlled reverb/delay. Does it avoid the same pitfalls?

The answer is no, not really. The two parameters governed by the joystick are distortion level and reverb mix. Why the decision was made to control distortion rather than reverb decay is baffling. The more logical choice would surely have been reverb decay, and reverb mix, or even reverb decay and distortion.

There are three reverb types in the Melee. The first is ambient reverb, the second is an octave down, akin to the Dark mode on their Slö pedal, and the third is a reverse reverb. The reverse reverb mode is highly sensitive to mix level. Adjusting the amount of decay, via a three-way switch, results in very different effects.

While the joystick might be a missed opportunity, on the reverb side, the Melee sounds fantastic across all three modes. The most inspiring effects are found using the hold and swell functionality in the ambient mode, or experimenting with classic shoegaze sounds in reverse reverb mode with the gain up. The option to switch the order of reverb and drive is a strong selling point, delivering runaway drive-into-reverb psychedelic sounds in a single pedal. The hard-wired three-way switches for tone and decay work pretty well. Tested with single coils and Les Paul humbuckers, the tone switch did its job, and there wasn't a bad setting. Similarly, the distortion played nicely with several combinations of pickups and amps. Where the distortion falls down is when stacked with other pedals in a chain. It's an LM308-based, RAT-like distortion, but other than at low gain settings, it gets out of control fast. Both the level and tone of the distortion are difficult to tame when stacking, which is a shame, since this pedal is likely to sit after other drives.

> "INSPIRING SOUNDS THAT ARE WORTH INVESTIGATING"

In conclusion, the joystick on the Melee is not quite fully exploited. Yet the rest of the functionality is so well thought-out that it redeems this shortcoming. If you own other drives, you're unlikely to use much of the dirt in this pedal outside of a recording session. However, even as a standalone reverb there are enough inspiring sounds in the Melee to be worth investigating.

Alex Lynham

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	✪✪✪✪
SOUND QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
VALUE FOR MONEY	✪✪✪✪
BUILD QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
USABILITY	✪✪✪✪
OVERALL RATING	✪✪✪✪½

AT A GLANCE

SOCKETS: In, Out, Power

CONTROLS: Volume, Tone, Decay, Effect order, Bypass, Sustain, Joystick (distortion/mix)

POWER: 9V DC Centre-negative

CONTACT: Walrus Audio, www.walrusaudio.com

Photography Olly Curtis

VOX AMPLUG SET BRIAN MAY LIMITED EDITION £149

Vox's mini headphone guitar amp gets a royal ascent

From the homemade guitar to the treble-boosted AC30s to the old six-pence-piece he uses as a pick, Brian May's tone is quite literally the stuff books are written about. So, imagine if you could distil all of that into a tiny headphone amp and mini-cab. That's exactly what Vox did when it set about creating the latest in its long-running line of amPlugs.

You've probably seen these before – the amPlug plugs directly into your guitar with a swivelling jack, loaded with controls and a headphone socket for the most portable practice possible. Now, Vox's amPlug has been issued as a signature Brian May edition and it comes in two guises. First is the lone amPlug Brian May (£59), but perhaps of more interest to Queen fans will be the amPlug Set Brian May Limited Edition, which is what we have here. The set bags you the same amPlug plus a matching red mini-cab boasting a 3-inch speaker and pumping out 2 watts of power.

The amPlug itself is surprisingly packed with features: it's got two channels (one 'standard' AC30 channel and one 'treble-boosted'); a trio of effects (delay, phaser and chorus) and an on-board drum machine. The latter hosts a number of – let's be honest – fairly dated-sounding, albeit useful drum patterns, but there's a needle in the haystack courtesy of the stomps and claps from *We Will Rock You*.

If you've ever tried a battery-powered mini-amp before, you'll know the results can vary. With our amPlug hooked up to the cabinet (it mounts in the top and there's a mini-jack cable included), we'd say this sits on the clearer end of the tones this type of amp produces. Channel one goes from a plucky clean, up to a smooth crunch sound, while holding down the power button switches to the higher-gain treble-boosted mode. At the top end of its gain and volume spectrum things become waspy, but roll it back a bit and we're back to classic overdrive territory. The effects are fun, with only the intensity and delay tempo tweakable, but they definitely give a moreish flavour of Brian's tones.

So will you be ousting your 'big amps' in favour of this? It's doubtful. But as a good-sounding practice amp with heaps of collectable appeal, this is a lot of fun. We can't help noticing the price jump between a regular amPlug and cab and this set, but we assume that royalty comes with some royalties. Just don't take it on the roof.

Stuart Williams

SUMMARY

FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★½☆
OVERALL RATING	★★★★☆

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Headphone/mini-practice amp

CHANNELS: Two

CONTROLS: Power, tap-tempo, gain, tone, volume, effect select/rhythm select switch

EFFECTS: Delay, phaser chorus

CONNECTIVITY: Input jack attached) headphone out, aux-in

POWER: AAA batteries (x2), 9V PP3 (cab)

CONTACT: Vox, www.voxamps.co.uk

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Words Jenna Scaramanga

COROOK

Why is everybody on the internet so mean? Nashville-based songwriter Corook ponders this relatable question in 2023's unlikeliest hit, *If I Were A Fish* – a song bashed out in ten minutes to help them process online bullying.

Corook explains how the song's title originated with their partner Olivia Barton. "I told Olivia, 'Play something that you've never played on an instrument that you don't know. She kept hitting the same two notes on my little Yamaha synth. Then she sang, 'If I were a fish…' I said, 'I love that! Let's start there.' Corook kept Olivia's two-note groove when they picked up the guitar, which is why the acoustic guitar plays only powerchords.

The 49-second TikTok was all they had written, but the reaction was so huge it was clear that If *I Were A Fish* needed to be a full song. This posed a problem: how could they maintain the same off-the-cuff charm with the pressure of millions of listeners? "We wrote the rest of it just doing mundane things, like driving around or washing dishes," explains Corook. "We were trying to get it out in a really natural way because that's how the song came out initially."

The guitar on *If I Were A Fish* is a PRS P20E, a parlour-sized acoustic. "I bought it so I could make a rubber bridge guitar out of it. You can hear it's kind of dead. I have a piece of rubber where the bridge is and I put flatwound strings on it. Rubber bridge guitars are really popular in the songwriting community right now. It makes it really percussive, which is fun to work with."

Fortunately, Corook is certain to avoid one-hit wonder status thanks to their long experience of writing. "My dad used to say, 'If you practised guitar as much as you practise Guitar Hero, you'd be pretty good.' I was like, 'Fine, I'll do that then!' My dad listened to Ani DiFranco and I got my desire to write songs from listening to her. I just fell in love with songwriting, and guitar happened to be how I fell in love with it."

Corook's singles to date, including 2022's viral *It's OK*, are compiled on *The Best of Corook (So Far)*, and they have a slew of new material lined up alongside headline shows in New York and LA. They have no plans to change how they work, though. "Whenever I think about what people want from me, I remember what the fish song is about: I am what I am, and I want to continue to be that."

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